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NATURAL RELIGION,

AS DISTINGUISH'D FROM

REVEALED:

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE ANNUAL

DUDLEIAN-LECTURE,

AT

HARVARD-COLLEGE in CAMBRIDGE,

May 9. 1759.

By *EBENEZER GAY*, A. M.

Paſtor of the Firſt Church of CHRIST in *Hingham*.

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Natural Religion,

as distinguished from *Revealed.*

ROM. ii. 14, 15.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law; these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves: Which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.

THE Belief of GOD's Existence is most essentially fundamental to all Religion, and having been at the first of the *Dudleian* Lectures established; the moral Obligation which it induceth upon the Nature of Man, may be the Subject of our present Inquiry.

A DEVOUT *Hermit* being asked, How he could profit in Knowledge, living in a Desart, without Men and Books? answered, 'I have one Book which I am always studying, and turning

10838

turning over Day and Night: The Heavens, the Earth and the Waters, are the Leaves of which it conſiſts.' The Characters of the Deity are plainly legible in the whole Creation around us: And if we open the Volume of our own Nature, and look within, we find there a Law written; — a Rule of virtuous Practice preſcribed.

RELIGION and Law (divine) are Words of promiſcuous Uſe; denoting in the general Signification thereof, *An Obligation lying upon Men to do thoſe Things which the Perfections of God, relative unto them, do require of them.* In this Definition (whether exact and full, or not,) I mean to imply all Things incumbent on ſuch reaſonable Creatures as Men are, toward all Beings with which they are concerned, GOD, the ſupreme, one another, and themſelves; and which are incumbent on them, by vertue of the Perfections of God, in the Relation there is betwixt Him and them: other Obligation which can be ſuppoſed to any of the ſame Things, not being of the religious Kind. And in the doing thoſe Things to which Religion is the Obligation, are included, beſides the actual Performance, the Principles, Motives and Ends thereof; all that is neceſſary to render any Acts of Men, whether internal or external, ſuch as the Perfections of the Deity require.

RELIGION is divided into natural and revealed:—*Revealed* Religion, is that which God hath made known to Men by the immediate

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Inſpiration of his Spirit, theDeclarations of his Mouth, and Inſtructions of hisProphets: *Natural*, that which bare Reaſon diſcovers and dictates: As 'tis delineated by the maſterly Hand of St. *Paul*, the Apoſtle of the Gentiles, in the Words of holy Scripture now read—Which I take as a proper and advantageousIntroduction to my intended Diſcourſe on this Head, *Viz.*

THAT Religion is, in ſome meaſure, diſcoverable by the Light, and practicable to the Strength, of Nature; and is ſo far fitly called *Natural* by Divines and learned Men. The Religion which is poſſible to be diſcover'd by the Light, and practis'd by the Power of Nature, conſiſts in rend'ring all thoſe inward and outward Acts of Reſpect, Worſhip and Obedience unto God, which are ſuitable to the Excellence of his all-perfect Nature, and our Relation to Him, who is our Creator, Preſerver, Benefactor, Lord, and Judge;— And in yielding to our Fellow-Men that Regard, Help and Comfort, which their partaking of the ſame Nature, and living in Society with us, give them a Claim to;—And in managing our Souls and Bodies, in their reſpective Actions and Enjoyments, in a way agreable to our *Make*, and conducive to our Eaſe and Happineſs: And doing all from a Senſe of the Deity, impoſing the Obligation, and approving the Diſcharge of it. For 'tis a Regard to Him in every moral Duty that conſecrates it, and makes it truly an Act of Religion. Theſe Things, indeed

deed, are contained in the Revelation of God, which affords the chief Aſſiſtance to our knowing and doing of them ; and yet they belong to the Religion of Nature, ſo far as Nature ſupplies any Light and Strength to the Diſcovery and Practice of them.

I. THAT Religion is in ſome meaſure, diſcoverable by the Light of Nature. TheObligation lying on us to do thoſe Things which the Perfections of God, as related to us, require, is diſcernable in the Light of natural Reaſon. ThisFaculty of the human Soul, exerciſed in the Contemplation of the univerſal Frame of Nature, or of anyParts thereof; and in the Obſervation of the general Courſe of Providence, or of particular Events therein, may convince Men of the Exiſtence and Attributes of God, the alwiſe, powerful and good Maker, Upholder, and Governor of all Things. It may be queſtioned whether the reaſoning Faculty, as it is in the Bulk of Mankind, be ſo acute and ſtrong, as from the neceſſary eternal Exiſtence of the Deity (which is as evident and inconteſtible, as that any Thing is) to prove all other Perfections do belong to God in an infinite Degree. If it be not eaſy to their Apprehenſion, that the Idea of neceſſary Self-exiſtence includes everyPerfection, and every Degree thereof, which can poſſibly be, or which implies not a Contradiction ; yet it is plain to the loweſt Capacity of thoſe who, with a littleAttention, ſurvey theWorks of

of God, that He is a Being of ſuch Perfection: And that, ſince He is their Maker, Owner, and Benefactor, to whom they are indebted for all that they are, and have, and on whom they depend for all they need, or can enjoy; they are bound to yield unto Him, in the Temper of their Minds, and Manner of their Behaviour, toward Him, and his Creatures they are concerned with, all that Regard which Religion founded in the Nature of God, and in the Nature of Man, and the Relation there is between them implies. They may perceive their Obligation to reverence, adore, and worſhip a Being of ſuch Perfection and Glory, as God is—to invoke the Almighty—pray unto Him, who is able to perform all Things for them; to give Thanks to Him, from whom they receive all Bleſſings; to aim and endeavour to pleaſe their Lord and Maſter, to whom they are accountable for their Actions, and who is juſt to puniſh their Offences, and bountiful to reward their Services.—They may diſcern the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of their Maker, in deſigning and fitting them for a ſocial Life in this World, and thence the ſacred Engagements they are under to mutual Benevolence, commutative Juſtice, and all ſuch Demeanour in their various Stations and Relations, as tends to promote the common Welfare, and the Good of Individuals.—Their Souls may know right well, how wonderfully God hath made them with Powers and Faculties ſuperior to any bodily Endowments;

which ſhould not therefore be ſubjected to the Sway of bruitiſh Appetites and blind Paſſions. Reaſon may know it's divine Right to govern, to maintain it's Empire in the Soul, regulating the Paſſions and Affections; directing them to proper Objects, and ſtinting them to juſt Meaſures. Nature affords conſiderable Light for the Diſcovery, and Arguments for the Proof, of ſuch Parts of Religion. There is an eſſential Difference between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, in many Caſes that relate to moral Conduct toward our Maker, Mankind, and ourſelves, which the Underſtanding (if made uſe of) cannot but diſcern. The obvious Diſtinction is founded in the Natures and Relations of Things: And the Obligation thence ariſing to chuſe the Good, and do that which is Right, is not (as I conceive) antecedent to any Law or Inſtitution, enjoining this upon us. It primarily originates from the Will and Appointment of the Author of thoſe Natures, and Founder of thoſe Relations, which are the Grounds and Reaſons of it. And his Will is ſignified by his apparently wiſe and good Conſtitution of Things, in their reſpective Natures and Relations. The Law of Nature is given by the God of Nature, who is Lord of all. He enacted it by creating and eſtabliſhing a World of Beings in ſuch Order, as he hath done. He publiſhes it to rational Creatures (as is neceſſary to it's binding them) in making them capable to learn from his Works, what is good, and what is required

red of them. Natural Conſcience is his Voice, telling them their Duty. This (in part) is the *work of the Law in their Hearts*.—'Tis the Engravement of it there, anſwerable to the Writing of it on Tables, in order to it's being made known: And ſo Men are *a Law unto themſelves*, are ſupply'd with a Rule of Actions within their own Breaſts. The Righteouſneſs which is of Nature (to adopt the Language of Inſpiration) ſpeaketh on ſome ſuch wiſe, as doth that which is of Faith: *Say not in thine Heart who ſhall aſcend into Heaven; or who ſhall deſcend into the Deep*, to bring us the Knowledge of our Duty? *The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Heart*, ſhewing thee what thou oughteſt to do: *Conſcience alſo bearing witneſs*, teſtifying for or againſt Men, according as they obey or diſobey the Word of Reaſon, which is the Word of God: And ſo *their Thoughts*—the general Notions of Good and Evil in them, make them either to accuſe themſelves as Tranſgreſſors of a known Law, or elſe excuſe them, as not having culpably done any Thing againſt it. In the due Exerciſe of their natural Faculties, Men are capable of attaining ſome Knowledge of God's Will, and their Duty, manifeſted in his Works, as if it were written in legible Characters on the Tables of their Hearts. And 'tis on this Account, that any Part of Religion is called Natural; and ſtands diſtinguiſhed, in *Theology*, from that which is revealed.

II. That Religion is, in ſome Meaſure, practicable to the Strength of Nature. There is doing, as well as knowing, by Nature, the Things contained in the Law of it. Knowing them is but in order to the doing them: And the Capacity to know them would be in vain, (which nothing in Nature is) if there was no Ability to do them. Whoever obſerves the divine Workmanſhip in human Nature, and takes a Survey of the Powers and Faculties with which it is endowed, muſt needs ſee that it was deſigned and framed for the Practice of Virtue: That Man is not merely ſo much lumpiſh Matter, or a *mechanical* Engine, that moves only by the Direction of an impelling Force; but that he hath a Principle of Action within himſelf, and is an Agent in the ſtrict and proper Senſe of the Word. The ſpecial Endowment of his Nature, which conſtitutes him ſuch, is the Power of Self-determination, or Freedom of Choice; his being poſſeſſed of which is as ſelf-evident, as the Explanation of the Manner of it's operating, is difficult: He feels himſelf free to act one Way, or another: And as he is capable of diſtinguiſhing between different Actions, of the moral Kind; ſo is he likewiſe of chuſing which he will do, and which leave undone. Further to qualify our Nature for virtuous or religious Practice (which neceſſarily muſt be of Choice) the Author of it hath annexed a ſecret Joy or Complacence of Mind to ſuch Practice, and as ſenſible a Pain or Diſplicence to the contrary.

trary. And this inward Judgment which every one paſſes on his own Actions, is enforced with another Principle, which belongs more or leſs to our common Nature, viz. a Regard to the Judgment that is paſſed upon our Conduct by other Beings; eſpecially Beings whoſe Favour or Diſpleaſure is of any Importance to us: There is a ſecret Satisfaction of Soul, which ariſeth from their Approbation; and as exquiſite a Senſe of Pain and Uneaſineſs from their Cenſure.—The Spirit of Man being thus formed within him, it is (according to the original Deſign and wiſe Contrivance of our Maker) naturally diſpoſed toward Religion: It hath an Inclination thereto implanted in it, which under the Direction of right Reaſon, is an inward Spring of Motion and Action, when Reaſon alone would not give ſufficient Quickneſs and Vigour in purſuing it's Dictates.

THERE may be ſomething in the intelligent moral World analogous to Attraction in the material Syſtem—ſomething that inclines and draws Men toward God, the Centre of their Perfection, and conſummate Object of their Happineſs; and which, if it's Energy were not obſtructed, would as certainly procure ſuch Regularity in the States and Actions of all intelligent Beings in the ſpiritual World, as that of Attraction doth in the Poſitions and Motions of all the Bodies in the material World. —"Created intelligent Beings (ſays Dr. *Cheyne*) are Images of the SUPREME INFINITE

NITE, as he calleth God. In Him there is an infinite Desire and Ardor of possessing and enjoying Himself, and his own infinite Perfections, in order to render Him happy: He himself is the sole Object of his own, and of the Felicity of all his Creatures. There must therefore be an Image of this his infinite Desire after Happiness in all his intelligent Creatures—a Desire after Happiness in a Re-union with Him. An intelligent Being, coming out of the Hands of infinite Perfection, with an Aversion, or even Indifferency, to be reunited with it's Author, the Source of it's utmost Felicity, is such a Shock, and Deformity in the beautiful Analogy of Things, such a Breach and Gap in the harmonious Uniformity, observable in all the Works of the Almighty, and that in the noblest and highest Part of his Works, as is not consistent with finite Wisdom and Perfection, much less with the supremely infinite Wisdom of the ALL-PERFECT. — This Principle was most certainly implanted in the Creation of intelligent Beings, in the very Fund and Substance of their Natures, thô there remains but few Footsteps and Instances of it's Being or Effects.— It wonderfully analogises with that of Attraction in the material World: As to the SUPREME INFINITE, it may very properly be called, his *Attraction* of them; and as to them, their *Central Tendency*, or Gravitation (so to speak) toward Him." This Tendency in human Nature, which that penetrating Enquirer

quirer into both the constituent Parts of it, accurately observes, is an Inclination to Religion—to many Offices and Acts of it, by which Men return and re-unite to the Author of their Beings; who hath so made all Nations of them, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might *feel after him, and find him.* There is in the common Nature, which all partake of, a Propension to Acts, not only of human Kindness, but also of divine Worship; which excites to the Performance of them, when proper Occasions of doing them occur, without previous, express Deliberation and Determination concerning them: And to forbear them is a painful Restraint upon Nature; and to do the contrary, is thwarting it's Inclination, and wresting it from it's Bent.—— There is observable in Man † a *natural Proclivity* (as *Origen* termeth it) towards his Maker; to acknowledge God; especially on Occasions of Need or Distress to have recourse unto Him. And from hence ariseth so universal a Consent of Mankind in paying some Homage to the Deity, which is not always directed to the true, because so many blindly follow natural Inclination, without consulting Reason, which should be it's Guide. There is such a Disposition in human Nature as makes Religion agreable to it; so that Divines of great Name have affirm'd it to be essential thereto, and that which raises it above the Brutal; and Philosophers, from what is innate to Man, have defined

† φίλτρον φυσικὸν τὸ πρὸς τ' κλίσιν.

defined him a *Creature capable of Religion.*— Whoever attends to this inward Furniture of our Nature for Religion, may eaſily perceive it to be God's Workmanſhip, primarily created unto good Works, that Men might walk in them. His Formation of them qualifys them, in a meaſure, for religious Practice; as his Regeneration, or Renovation of them doth more ſo. And his fitting them by Nature therefor, is a Work of his, to which the Work of Sanctification, in his furniſhing them with Grace to evangelical Obedience, beareth Analogy. The former is the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, that they may do, as well as know, what it enjoins: The latter is the Impreſſion of the Goſpel upon them, that, thro' Chriſt's ſtrengthening them, they may do what it requires. And by doing the Things contained in the Law of Nature, Men *ſhew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, and are a Law unto themſelves*, as truly and plainly, as regenerate Chriſtians, by doing the Things contained in the Goſpel, are *manifeſtly declared to be the Epiſtle of Chriſt, written, not with Ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in Tables of Stone, but in fleſhly Tables of the Heart.* The Scriptures thus deſcribing the Religion of Nature and of Chriſt, clearly diſtinguiſh between them; as the former may be practiſed by the Strength of Nature, and the latter by the Strength of Chriſt, — his Spirit helping the Infirmities of our Nature.

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How far the Duties of Religion are poſſible to be performed by the Strength of Nature, in a lapſed State; and to what Meaſure of divine Approbation and Acceptance, Reaſon, unenlightned by Revelation, may not be able to determine.—The Law of Nature is purely a Law of Works, and requires perfect Obedience, which the Tranſgreſſors of it, as all Men are, cannot yield to it: And whether that which is wanting in their Obedience, may be ſupplied by Repentance and Humility in them, and by Mercy and Pardon in God, cannot be certainly known without a Revelation of his Will, on which it wholly depends. The Goodneſs of God, in the general Courſe of his Providence, toward ſinful Mankind, ſheweth Him to be placable, and leadeth them to Repentance; but doth not aſſure them of Pardon upon it, much leſs of the Reward of eternal Life, for imperfect, tho' it ſhould be ſincere, Obedience. If Reaſon doth not ſee and pronounce it inconſiſtent with the Perfections of God to pardon Sinners, on the ſole Condition of their Repentance; yet it cannot infer from them, that he will:—All that it can ſay, is in the Words of a Heathen King, *Who can tell if the Lord will turn from his Anger, that we periſh not?* Such Inducement they may have to repent, and turn from their evil Ways:—And it may farther encourage them to better Obedience, by ſuggeſting the Conſideration which may be had by a merciful God of the Frailty of their

Nature, and the graciousAllowances He may poſſibly make them, whoſe Strength,ſo weakned as it is, cannot reach the Heighth of their Duty. In the Preſcription of Duty, 'tis not unreaſonable, that what may be required, even in Rigour, ſhould be preciſely determined, thô in Execution of Juſtice, or Diſpenſation of Recompence, Conſideration may be had of our Weakneſs; whereby both the Authority of our Governor may be preſerved, and his Clemency glorified. Men's Thoughts or Conſciences accuſing them for theViolation of the Law of Nature, implies a Fear which is not groundleſs, that they ſhall be brought into Judgment: And their Thoughts excuſing and approving of them for doing, in ſome Meaſure, what the Law requires, implies a Hope, which may not be altogether vain, that they ſhall be accepted. Thô it ſhould be, as one ſaith, "That all the moral Virtues are ſo many Cyphers—unavailing Nothings, unleſs the Deity be placed as the principal Figure at the Head of them;" yet if practiſed out of any Senſe of Duty to God, and with a View to pleaſing Him, as it is poſſible they may be, and have been,ſhallwe ſay,they are meerly ſplendid Vices in his Eyes; and that the moſt humble Prayers of natural Men are Blaſphemies in his Ears? May there not be ſuch a conſcientious doing *by Nature the Things contained in the Law* of it, as, thrô the Riches of divine Bounty and Goodneſs, ſhall in ſome low Meaſure, compar'd with doing the ſame by Grace, be acceptable

ceptable and rewardable? May not a *God of Knowledge, by whom Actions are weighed*, discern some Good in those done by the Strength of Nature, and approve the honest, thô weak, Efforts thereof, to serve him; and thereupon, besides outward Favours (of which He is liberal to all both good and bad Men) grant the Succours of his Grace, enabling them to do the same, and other Things to better Acceptance, and to the obtaining a greater Reward, even that which the Christian Revelation proposes; and is thereby differenced and distinguished from natural Religion?

And, now, if what hath been so imperfectly spoken, be according to the Truth in Nature, and not inconsistent with the Christian Verity, the proper Use and Improvement of it is, *To form a just Estimate of Natural Religion*; and guard against the dangerous Extremes in our Regards to it—Not to have a debasing, nor a too exalted Notion of it.

1. We should not depreciate and cry down Natural Religion, on Pretence of advancing the Honour of Revealed—as if they were two opposite Religions, and could no more stand together in the same Temple than Dagon and the Ark of God. Whatever Distinction we observe between them, there is no Contrariety in the one to the other: They subsist harmoniously together, and mutually strengthen and confirm each other. Revealed Religion is an

Additional to Natural; built, not on the Ruins, but on the ſtrong and everlaſting Foundations of it. Nothing therefore can be vainer and more prepoſterous, than the Attempt to raiſe the Credit of the one, upon the Diſcredit of the other; as if to allow any Virtue, or any Praiſe, in natural Religion, would be derogatory to the Honour of revealed: And to repreſent the former as inſignificant to the grand Purpoſe of Religion, and chief End of Man; the glorifying and enjoying God:—As availing nothing towards Man's Recovery from a ſinful State, and his Attainment unto Holineſs and Happineſs:—As if his knowing and doing *by Nature the Things contained in the Law* of it, could be no more acceptable to his Maker, nor profitable to himſelf, than his Ignorance and Neglect of them: And whatever Improvement and Progreſs he made in natural Religion, he was not a Step nearer the Kingdom of God; nor a fairer Candidate for Heaven than a *Heathen-Man, or a Publican.* The Law of Nature, like that of *Moſes*, may be ſerviceable unto Men, *as a School-Maſter to bring them to Chriſt*, for higher Inſtruction; eſpecially where the Means of ſuch are afforded; and ſo uſher them into a State of Grace. Notwithſtanding the Inſufficiency of natural Religion to their Salvation, yet it may, in ſome Meaſure, prepare them to be Partakers of the Benefit, without any Diminution of the Glory of the Goſpel, which is the Grant of it, or Detraction from the Merits of our bleſſed Redeemer

deemer, who is the Author of it. It is only by Grace that ſinful Men can be ſaved; yet, by making ſome good Uſe of their rational Powers (weakened as they be) in the Study and Practice of natural Religion, they may be in a better Preparation of Mind to comply with the Offers and Operations of divine Grace, than if they wholly give up themſelves to the Conduct of ſenſual Appetites & Paſſions. Whether thoſe Offers & Operations of divine Grace are deſigned for, and ever vouchſafed to ſuch as are not favoured with Revelation; and it be poſſible for them to obtain Mercy, in the Day when God by Jeſus Chriſt ſhall judge the Things which they have done, *according to the Goſpel*; is a Point which Revelation only can determine; and is not my Province to diſcuſs.

In the Preference we give to revealed Religion, we ſhould not for the ſake of any particular Truth we apprehend to be deliver'd in it, haſtily renounce a Principle of natural Religion, ſeeming contrary thereto. Both ſhould be carefully examined, before either be rejected: Elſe we may err, after the manner which the *Sadduces* did, *Not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God.* It muſt be owing to our Ignorance, or Miſapprehenſion of Things hard to be underſtood in the Book of Nature, and the holy Bible, that we cannot reconcile them. No Doctrine, or Scheme of Religion, ſhould be advanced, or received as ſcriptural and divine, which is plainly and abſolutely

ſolutely inconſiſtent with the Perfections of God, and the Poſſibility of Things. Abſurdities and Contradictions (from which few human Schemes are entirely free) are not to be obtruded upon our Faith. No Pretence of Revelation can be ſufficient for the Admiſſion of them. The manifeſt Abſurdity of any Doctrine, is a ſtronger Argument that it is not of God, than any other Evidence can be that it is. "A Revelation muſt be agreable to the Nature of God, and Poſſibility of Things." We are not raſhly to determine concerning one that it is not ſo, becauſe we don't eaſily and clearly ſee it to be ſo: Nor plead that any may be ſo, which contradicts all our natural Ideas of the Attributes of God. To ſay, in Defence of any religious Tenets, reduced to Abſurdity, that the Perfections of God, his Holineſs, Juſtice, Goodneſs, are quite different Things in Him, from what, in an infinitely lower Degree, they are in Men, is to overthrow all Religion both natural and revealed; and make our Faith, as well as Reaſon vain.—For, if we have no right Notions of the Deity, (as 'tis certain, upon this Suppoſition, we have none,) as we worſhip, ſo we believe, we know not what, or why. We don't know what Reſpects are due from us to the Perfections of God; or that any are required of us by Him. For, as well as any other moral Perfections, Truth may be quite different in God, from what it is in Men; and ſo there may be nothing of that which we conceive of as

ſuch,

such, in his Assertions and Promises.—He may declare one Thing, and mean another; promise one Thing, and do another:— God may be True and Faithful, and yet deceive us; as well as Holy and Just, and do that which is not Right. Revelation gives us the same (tho' clearer) Ideas of the Attributes of God, which we have from Nature and Reason: And if it taught any Thing contrary thereto, it would unsay what it saith, and destroy it's own Credibility. To set the Gifts of God at variance, is to frustrate the good Design and deprive ourselves of the Benefit of them. Vehemently to decry Reason, as useless, or as a blind Guide, leading Men into Error and Hell; and to run down natural Religion as mere *Paganism*, derogates from the Credit of revealed, subverts our Faith in it, and dissolves our Obligation to practice it.

2. We should not magnify and extol natural Religion, to the Disparagement of Revealed. We cannot say, that the Light and Strength of Nature, how great soever, in it's original State of Rectitude, had no Assistance from Revelation, toward the first Man's actual Knowledge and Performance of his Duty to his Maker. At the first opening of his Eyes and Understanding, he might not by one intuitive View, have a clear and full Discernment of the Perfections of God stamped on his Works, and the moral Obligations engraved in his Heart.— God made Himself and his

his Will known to *Adam* in ſome other Way beſide that of his Creation. There was ſome *other* Voice of the Lord, beſide that of univerſal Nature's declaring his Being and Pleaſure to him; and by which more might be ſpoken for his Inſtruction, than we have an Account of in the Moſaick Hiſtory. And perhaps ſuch Manifeſtation as God more immediately made of Himſelf to Man, put his Reaſon in Exerciſe for all the Diſcoveries it was capable of making afterwards from the Works of Creation. Had Man, with all his natural Endowments in their perfect Order and Strength, been placed in this World, and no Notice given him of it's Maker, might he not have ſtood wondring ſome Time at the amazing Fabrick, before he would have thence, by Deductions of Reaſon, argued an inviſible Being, of eternal Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, to be the Author of it and him; to whom he was therefore obliged to pay all Regards ſuitable to ſuch glorious Excellencies? Would he ſo ſoon and eaſily have made thoſe Diſcoveries, which are neceſſary to the Perfection of natural Religion, underſtood and practic'd by him in Paradiſe, till he eat of *the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?* If his being Created after the Image of God imports more, than his Formation with a ſufficient Capacity in his Nature for, and entire Diſpoſition to, even the actual Poſſeſſion and Uſe of all that Knowledge, Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs, of which the Religion of Nature, conſiſts;

conſiſts ; yet his falling into Sin, and effacing the divine Image in his Soul, greatly alter'd the Caſe, with reſpect to him, and his Poſterity, and made Revelation a neceſſary Supplement of ſupernatural Light and Strength, for the Diſcovery and Performance of acceptable and available Religion. And ſuch a Revelation, in it's firſt Degree and early Dawn of it, was graciouſly vouchſafed to Man, upon his Fall into a State of Darkneſs and Weakneſs, Sin and Miſery. — Which Revelation continued, and gradually encreaſed, to the Church of God in all paſt Ages of it from the Beginning, hath done more to preſerve and propagate that little even of natural Religion, which there hath been among Mankind, than all the boaſted Improvements of Nature's dimmed Light, and enfeebled Powers have done. The firſt Parents of Mankind, no doubt, inſtructed their Children in the Principles and Duties of Religion, not only thoſe which concern'd them as ſinful Creatures, and are founded in the new and encouraging Relations God ſtands in to us, which the Goſpel, publiſhed in Paradiſe, reveals, but alſo in thoſe which are comprehended in the Law of their Creation : Otherwiſe they might not ſoon enough, if ever, have arriv'd to a competent Knowledge of them. It might have been long, e're Reaſon, uncultivated by Education, would by ſearching, have found out God — ſo much as that He is. Perhaps of it's own natural Motion, now become ſo dull and ſtupid, it

would not have enquired after Him, or have proceeded far in the Diſcovery of Him. To a traditionary Revelation, how imperfect and obſcure ſoever, amongſt moſt Nations that have dwelt on the Face of the Earth, might be owing the Knowledge they had of God, and divine Things:— At leaſt the Hint thus given them of ſuch Things, might awake their rational Powers to any Exerciſe about them, which otherwiſe might have lain dormant in their benighted Minds.

REASON, as well as Revelation, teacheth us, that human Nature, in it's original Conſtitution, and as it came out of the Hands of a good Creator, muſt be Perfect in it's Kind, and that it ſince, by our Abuſe of it, is wofully impaired. It might not approach quite ſo near the Angelical, yea, Divine Nature in it's integral State, as ſome imagine; nor might it by the Sin of the *Protoplaſt* fall quite ſo low, as others affirm; and become a ſtrange heterogeneous Compound of two other Natures, retaining nothing of Humanity in it. The ſuperior Excellency and Strength of innocent *Adam*'s Soul, might not be ſo much above the common Standard, ſince, as the *Talmudiſts* deſcribe his bodily Stature—ſo Tall, that, ſtanding on the Earth, he could touch the Heavens with his Hand; yet it doubtleſs had every way the Advantage for the free and ſublime Exerciſes of a rational Soul. Some appear to have an extravagantly high Opinion, and others a too debaſing Notion of human Nature,

even

even in it's lapſed Eſtate: There are ſtill in it, as received by Derivation from apoſtate Parents, "ſome *legible Characters*, *Out-lines*, and *Lineaments* of it's Beauty; ſome *magnificent Ruins*, which ſhew what it had been, enough to demonſtrate the original Impreſſion of the divine Image and Law." It is, however diſorder'd and debilitated, a rational Nature, capable of religious Knowledge and Practice. But can we gueſs, how much thereof it would attain to, in the ſhort Time of this Life, if it were left altogether uncultivated in Individuals; and Mankind had run wild, like the Beaſts of the Field? How much more would the Generality of 'em know, than what they know as *natural brute Beaſts*? and in thoſe Things have corrupted themſelves: The higher Powers of their Nature not exerting themſelves for the firſt Years of their Lives, and ſo the more ſubjected to the Sway of the inferior, might be of little Uſe toward the Diſcovery and Performance of the Things of Religion: Any innate Inclination to them might be ſmothered in the Crowd of worldly Luſts; the Attention of the Mind diverted from them, and all the Eſſays to do them, be hindered by the Amuſements of ſenſual Pleaſure, the Encroachments of ſecular Buſineſs, the Prevalence of bad Cuſtoms and Examples. The Capacities with which they are made, the Principles with which they are endowed, in order to their knowing of, and acting agreable to, moral Obligations, might be ſuppreſ-

ſed, and kept down by violent Appetites and Paſſions, and lie buried under earthly Affections. Men might have been abſolutely without God in the World;— without any Senſe of the Deity upon their Minds; without all Thought of any other Things than ſuch as were juſt before them. Their Knowledge and Care might not have extended beyond the Sphere of Senſe: Their Prudence might have appear'd only in Matters of a civil Life, and a temporary Concern; and poſſibly there wou'd have been no Religion in the World, but that which conſiſted merely in, as Atheiſts ſay, all was introduced by, *State-Policy*.

THUS much, I think, may be probably inferred from the Hiſtory of all Ages of the World, in which the Nations which have not enjoyed the Revelation which God from Time to Time granted to his Church, have had ſo little of Natural Religion among them, mixed and ſpoiled with the groſſeſt Errors, Superſtitions, and Abominations. The Glimmerings of Nature's Light, and ſmall Remains of it's Strength, not being duly improved, were, in a manner, loſt from among them, and they *ſat in Darkneſs, and the Region of the Shadow of Death*: Thô what might be known of God, was manifeſt to them in his Works; and they had moreover ſome obſcure Traditions, which gave Riſe to their heatheniſh Worſhip, and according to which they ordered the Rites of it. While we are amaz'd at the Stupidity which they labour'd under

under in their reaſonable Faculties, it ſheweth us what is to be expected from ſavage, undiſciplined Nature. We do not argue therefrom the Incapacity of human Reaſon, under all the Diſadvantages of our lapſed State, to know and do better; but the Inefficacy of it, in fact, to the Purpoſes of Religion, when unaſſiſted by Revelation.—And were it not for this, we may gueſs what a deplorable State of Ignorance and Wickedneſs, increaſing from one Age to another, all Mankind would have been in at this Day. What hath poliſhed Nature and refined Reaſon to boaſt of, in Matters of Religion, among the wiſeſt and moſt learned of the Heathens? Did they *by Wiſdom know God, and glorify Him as God.* Did *Athens*, that Eye of the World, ſee the *inviſible Things of Him*, made viſible enough in his Works to the Eye of human Underſtanding, *even his eternal Power and God-head*? The Altar erected there to the UNKNOWN GOD, was a Monument of their Ignorance of the true. If they worſhipped Him at all, they *did it ignorantly, and were in all Things too ſuperſtitious.* Was the State of natural Religion better at *Rome*, when Learning flouriſhed there, than that of the Chriſtian is, now Popery prevails? They, *who profeſſed themſelves wiſe, became Fools*; as great, as if *they had ſaid, There is no God,* in *changing the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beaſts, and creeping Things*;

and,

and, *ſerving the Creature, more than the Creator*; and approving and doing thoſe Things that are contrary, not only to the Religion, but even the Inclination of Nature. —— Under much Doubt and Uncertainty have the ableſt Writers of them left the firſt Principles of Natural Religion. It is enough (ſaith one) to raiſe the Pity of a Chriſtian, when he reads *Cicero*'s Diſcourſe of the *Nature of the Gods*, to find the Diſputants fighting in the dark, puzzling themſelves, and one another, confounding Truth and Error; and at laſt drawing off almoſt on equal Terms without Victory's declaring on either Side.—Not to mention the Deficiencies and Errors in any Scheme of Natural Religion, which the learned Heathen ever preſented the World with; I may ſay, that the Chriſtian Revelation contains one far more entire and ſatisfying. The Principles and Duties of it are therein ſtated, explained, and enforced, in a Way far above whatever they were before. And 'tis not without Reaſon ſuppoſed, that they would not have been propounded ſo clearly and fully as they be, in the moſt celebrated Writings of Morality among the Heathen, had there been none of divine Inſpiration among the People of God.

The Goſpel of Chriſt hath to be ſure been *a Light to lighten the* modern deiſtical *Gentiles*: For the juſter Notions they have of the divine Attributes, and moral Duties than the ancient, they are greatly indebted to that Revelation

velation which they decry. Not to ſay any Thing of thoſe heavenly Truths and important Duties, which are taught only in the Bible; 'tis there we learn the Religion of Nature in it's greateſt Purity; which, if there were nothing more to be ſaid in it's Commendation might be enough to raiſe our Eſteem of it. And the Grace of God appears in aſſiſting Reaſon by Revelation in thoſe Diſcoveries, which it poſſibly could, but never did, nor would make, without ſuch Help. — And the ſame is true, with reſpect to the Performances of Duty: *In thy Light we ſee Light.* It is in the Light of Revelation, added to that of Nature, that Things are ſo plain and eaſy to our diſcerning, as that we are ready to think bare Reaſon muſt diſcover them to all Mankind, and that we, un-enlightned by the Goſpel, ſhould have known as much of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion. But, if we are thence inſenſible of, and unthankful for, *the tender Mercy of our God*, whereby *the Day-ſpring from on High hath viſited us*, we are ſtupidly inconſiderate; and need not (as we are apt) to ſmile at the odd Philoſophy of the ſimple *Ruſtick*, who thought the World had little Benefit by the Light of the Sun, "Becauſe it ſhin'd in the Day-time." By Means of Revelation we have the right Uſe of Reaſon, in Matters of Religion: And, by the due Exerciſe of Reaſon, ſo excited and directed, we have the ineſtimable Benefit of Revelation. Both are *good Gifts*,—Rays from

the

the Father of Lights, to *enlighten every Man that cometh into the World.* — The Mind hath great Satisfaction in obſerving the harmonious Agreement between them, and the Objects of religious Knowledge and Faith appear the more beautiful and amiable in this double Light: And the better we underſtand and practiſe the Religion of Nature, the wiſer and better Chriſtians ſhall we be.

In a juſt Senſe of this, and with a pious View to the Eſtabliſhment of Religion, natural and revealed, and the Propagation of it in this Land, free from impure Mixtures of Heatheniſh and Popiſh Errors and Superſtitions, by the Miniſtry of able, authorized Preachers, was the Anniverſary-Lecture, here founded by the Honourable Judge Dudley, whoſe Memory muſt be ever precious in this Society, as his Praiſe will be in our Churches, as well as Courts.

And this Diſcourſe may lead the Students of the College, ſuch eſpecially as are deſign'd for the Work of the Miniſtry, to reflect on the great Advantage of a liberal Education, to open and enlarge their Minds for the Knowledge, and diſpoſe their Hearts to the Love and Practice, and fit them to be Preachers of Religion. — Academical Studies, particularly in natural Philoſophy and mathematical Sciences, tend to impregnate your Souls with grand Ideas of the Attributes of God, diſplayed in his Works, *which are great, ſought out of all them that have Pleaſure therein*; and help you more

more clearly to discern the Foundations of natural Religion. Some other Branches of Literature may seem more dry and barren, yet are useful to furnish you with the Tongue of the Learned; and prepare you to the Search of the Scriptures in their inspired Originals; so that at those Fountains of sacred Truth, your Souls, thirsty of it, may possibly drink it in purer, than it is convey'd to us in the best Translations. All the Skill you here acquire in Arts and Sciences, may be serviceable to you in the Profession of *Theology*: And the better Scholars you go from this Place, the abler Divines will you prove, and the more Good may you do in the World. Having such a Price in your Hands to get Wisdom, may every One of you have a Head and Heart to it!—How reproachful will it be to you, and not a little dishonourable to this School of the Prophets, if, when for the Time and happy Advantages enjoyed in it, ye ought to be Teachers, you should then have need that one teach you the Rudiments of natural Religion, and the first Principles of the Oracles of God?

It concerns us all to make Proficiency in Religion, answerable to our Capacities therefor, and the Means and Helps afforded us thereto—That having the Foundations of it well laid in our Minds, by convincing Reasons, and authentic Testimonies of Scripture, we go on to Perfection: Which that we may do;—Let us, as the Discourse now had, ad-

moniſhes us, have a due Reſpect both to natural and revealed Religion : And not ſuffer our Zeal to ſwell ſo high, and move in ſo ſtrong a Current towards the one, as ſhall prove a Drain from, and lower the Regard, which we owe to the other—Let us faithfully improve all the Light and Strength which natural Reaſon and divine Revelation ſupply, toward our knowing and doing *whatſoever Things are true — honeſt — juſt — pure — lovely — and of good Report — in which there is any Virtue, and any Praiſe* ; and ſo make continual Advance in Religion, 'till we come unto *a perfect Man*, in the redintegrated State of Nature—*unto the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of CHRIST.*

A M E N.

THE

THE CHARACTER OF THE LATE HONORABLE Judge *DUDLEY*,

As it was inserted in the *Boston-News-Letter*, *February* 7th, 1751.

ROXBURY, February 2. 1750,1.

YEsterday, with great Decency and Respect, were interr'd here the Remains of the Honourable PAUL DUDLEY, Esq; Chief-Justice of the Superior Court of Judicature, *&c.* within this Province: A Gentleman not more distinguished by his high Station, than by his eminent Virtues and great Abilities, so long and happily employ'd for the Good of the Public.

He was born at *Roxbury* in the Year 1675, was the Grandson of THOMAS DUDLEY, Esq; one of the first Governors of the *Massachusetts* Colony, and the eldest surviving Son of the late Governor DUDLEY, to whose

Eſtate, as he was principal Heir, ſo he inherited a large Share of thoſe ſuperior Talents that enrich'd the Mind of that great and accompliſh'd Gentleman.

At the Age of eleven Years he was found qualified for an Admiſſion into *Harvard*-College, where he proceeded Batchelor of Arts in the Year 1690, and Maſter of Arts in the Year 1693. Soon after which he went over to *England*, and was enter'd a Student in the Inner-Temple. After he had finiſhed his Studies there, and had been called to the Bar, he return'd to his native Country, to the Service of which he had early devoted himſelf.

As his natural Endowments were uncommon, ſo he had abundantly furniſhed his Mind by great Reading and cloſe Study. His Knowledge (far from being confin'd to the Law) was great in moſt Parts of Literature: He was well verſed in Natural Philoſophy; an honourable Proof of which was his being a Member of the ROYAL SOCIETY: He had thoroughly ſtudied Divinity: And in Hiſtory, both civil and ſacred, he had ſcarce an equal. Theſe were ſome of the Accompliſhments which ſo well qualified him for public Service, which was the conſtant Buſineſs of his Life.

Upon his Return to *New-England* he was appointed Attorney-General for the Province, and for ſeveral Years he ſerved the Public in that Capacity. He was ſome time a Repreſentative for his native Town in the General Court; and ſate for many Years at the Council-Board: In all which important Offices he acquitted himſelf with great Fidelity and Honour. But it was in the Seat of Juſtice he was moſt generally known, and therefore moſt admir'd. To that he was advanced in the Year 1718, being then appointed one of the Juſtices of the Superior Court, of which, upon the

Death

Death of the Honourable Judge LYNDE, he was commiſſionated the Chief-Juſtice : And in this high and important Station he ſerved the Province till his Death. Here it was that he diſplay'd ſo eminently his admirable Talents, eſpecially his quick Apprehenſion, his uncommon Strength of Memory, and extenſive Knowledge ; and at the ſame time his great Abhorrence of Vice, together with that impartial Juſtice which neither reſpected the Rich, nor countenanced the Poor Man in his Cauſe. Thus while with pure Hands and an upright Heart he adminiſtred Juſtice in his Circuit through the Province, he gain'd the general Eſteem and Veneration of the People. As his Preſence always commanded Reſpect, ſo it might juſtly be ſaid of him that he ſcatter'd Iniquity with his Eyes, which ſtruck with Awe the moſt daring Offenders. When he ſpake, it was with ſuch Authority and peculiar Energy of Expreſſion, as never fail'd to command Attention, and deeply impreſs the Minds of all who heard him ; and his Sentiments of Law and Evidence in all Cauſes before the Court, had generally a determining Weight with thoſe who were charged with the Trial of them.

The Powers of his Mind retain'd their Vigour to a remakable Degree in his advanced Age ; though he labour'd under great Indiſpoſitions of Body : Theſe were often heavy upon him while attending the Buſineſs of the Court, which perhaps occaſioned his diſcovering ſome Impatience, when Arguments at the Bar were drawn out to a great Length, and his expreſſing himſelf with ſome Appearance of Severity : But if hereby he gave any Diſguſt in public, he made full Amends for it in private ; where all who enjoy'd his Company were charm'd with his entertaining and prolite Converſation : For, with all his other Accompliſhments, he had naturally a moſt happy Turn for Converſation ; in which he always ſhew'd the Gentleman, the Scholar, and the Chriſtian.

As

As he early made a Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, ſo he was ever careful to adorn it by a ſuitable Conduct in the ſeveral Relations of Life. He always expreſs'd a tender Concern for the Intereſts of his Country, both civil and religious, and greatly lamented any ill-boding Aſpects upon either. He was a Friend and Patron to Men of Learning and Religion, eſpecially to the Clergy, to whom he always ſhew'd a particular Reſpect. The Intereſts of our College he tenderly regarded while he lived; and at his Death he enrich'd it by a generous Donation.

All who had the Honour of an Acquaintance with him and his Family, knew him to be one of the moſt tender Huſbands, a kind and indulgent Maſter, a good Neighbour, and an affectionate Friend. As in his own Houſe his Behaviour was truly exemplary; ſo he was an eminent Pattern of juſt Deportment in the Houſe of GOD: His unaffected Gravity and devout Attention, while engag'd in Divine Service there, ſhew'd him to be what he was at Heart, a Man of real Religion. This Religion was his Support and Comfort in the Hour of Death. He had the Exerciſe of his Reaſon during the whole of his Sickneſs; and all along diſcover'd that Humility, Patience, Charity and Confidence in his GOD and SAVIOUR, which one would wiſh to ſee in a dying Friend.

His vertuous Conſort, (to whom he owed no ſmall Part of the Happineſs of his Life,) was one of the Daughters of Colonel JOHN WAINWRIGHT of *Ipſwich*. By her he had ſeveral Children, who all died in their Infancy. This Lady ſtill lives to deplore her great Loſs, and mingle her Tears with thoſe of the Public.

Bartholomew Kneeland
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11.

THE AUTHORITY of TRADITION Considered,

AT THE

LECTURE

Founded by the

Hon. *Judge* DUDLEY,

IN

HARVARD COLLEGE,

November 5, 1777.

By *Edward Wigglesworth*, M. A.
HOLLIS-*Professor of Divinity.*

BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND:
PRINTED BY THOMAS & JOHN FLEET, 1778.

☞ The Reader is desired to make the following marginal Corrections.

Page 19. [m] 2 Tim.
20. [n] Ch. xx. 31.
26. [u] 2 Tim. i. 13.
30. [g] 2 Tim.
31. [h] 2 *Epist.*

The AUTHORITY of TRADITION considered.

Matthew xv. 6.

THUS HAVE YE MADE THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD OF NONE EFFECT BY YOUR TRADITION.

THE Buſineſs aſſigned by the honorable, learned and pious Founder, for the third in the quadrennial courſe of his Lectures, is "to be for the detecting, and convicting and expoſing the idolatry of the *Romiſh* Church, their tyranny, uſurpations, damnable hereſies, fatal errors, abominable ſuperſtitions and other crying wickedneſſes in their high places; and finally to prove that the *Church of Rome* is that myſtical *Babylon*, that man of ſin, that apoſtate church, ſpoken of in the New-Teſtament."

The Gentlemen who have preceded me in this Lecture, have conſidered and confuted the arguments urged by the *Romaniſts* in proof of the *infallibility* of their Church,[a] and of the *ſupremacy* of the *Biſhop* of

[a] Dr. Wiggleſworth, A. D. 1757.

of Rome.[b] The charge of *idolatry*,[c] which the Proteſtants bring againſt the Romaniſts, has been ſupported. The *papal* religion has been ſhewn to be a *complex falſhood*.[d] And the characters of the *man of ſin*,[e] as they are given by St. *Paul*, have been clearly evinced, to be applicable to the *Church of Rome*.

The part which I ſhall take in this controverſy, will be to conſider one of the grand ſources of the fatal errors, and groſs corruptions of the *Romiſh* church. The words of my text will naturally lead me to conſider the AUTHORITY which the church of *Rome* aſſigns to TRADITION, and to point out ſome of the fatal conſequences of it. They are the reply of our Saviour to the Phariſees, who found fault with his diſciples for ſitting down to their meals, without taking care previouſly to cleanſe themſelves from any pollutions they might have contracted. This conduct of his diſciples the Phariſees charge with being a tranſgreſſion of the tradition of the Elders. Our Saviour from thence takes occaſion to reprehend them for the ſuperſtitious regard they paid to thoſe traditions. He charges them with tranſgreſſing, by means of that regard, the commandment of God. In ſupport of the charge he inſtances in their tradition reſpecting the conduct of children towards their parents. "God, ſaith he, has commanded by Moſes, ſaying, honour thy father and thy mother;" and hath enforced this precept by that awful ſanction, "Whoſo curſeth his father or mother, let him ſurely die." "But ye ſay, Whoſoever ſhall ſay to his father or his

[b] Mr. Foxcroft, A. D. 1761.
[c] Dr. Mayhew, A. D. 1765.
[d] Dr. Mather, A. D. 1769.
[e] Dr. Cooper, A. D. 1773.

duties to be practiſed by them, were confeſſedly, either expreſsly contained in the holy Scriptures, or elſe plainly to be proved by them, by juſt and neceſſary conſequence. But when the *Pope* and *Council of Trent* were reſolved not to reform the errors and corruptions of the church, which were grown to an amazing height before the Reformation; and when they found that their doctrine of *tranſubſtantiation*, of *purgatory*, of *ſeven ſacraments*; and their practice of *worſhipping ſaints, images, and relicks*, of reading the *Scriptures* and the *ſervice of God* in an *unknown tongue*, were not to be proved by the Scriptures, they deemed it expedient to ſtretch and enlarge the rule of faith and practice beyond its ancient limits. Such abſurd doctrines and ſuperſtitious practices not being warranted by the Scriptures, they judged it expedient to augment the Canon of Scripture, by the addition of ſeveral *apocryphal* books to the Old Teſtament; books never received by the *Jewiſh* church, to which were committed the ancient Oracles of God; becauſe they were compoſitions merely human, written by uninſpired perſons, after the ſpirit of prophecy had ceaſed in that church. And after the rule of their faith and practice had received this addition, leſt it ſhould not yet be large enough for their purpoſe, they were pleaſed to add to it the *unwritten word*, or *oral tradition*. This the Council of *Trent* has declared to be of *equal authority* with the ſacred Scriptures themſelves, and that it ought to be received with the *ſame pious reverence and affection*.[f] To juſtify their ſetting up *oral tradition* as equal in authority with the *written word* of God, the *Romaniſts* tell us, that the books of the New-Teſtament

[f] Pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia ſuſcipit, ac veneratur.

his mother, that, by which thou mighteſt be profited by me, is a gift," devoted to ſome pious purpoſe, and neglects "to honour his father or his mother," either by not paying them that reſpect which is due from children to their parents, or by refuſing to afford them that relief which their neceſſitous circumſtances may require, "he ſhall be free" from the obligation of the divine command. In this manner the Phariſees made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition.

To ſhew, that the charge which Chriſt brings againſt the Phariſees, may, with equal juſtneſs, be brought againſt the church of *Rome*, I ſhall, by divine aſſiſtance, endeavour at this time,

Faithfully to ſtate the tenets of that church, reſpecting *tradition* :—— then,

Conſider the force of the arguments, urged in ſupport of thoſe tenets:——and laſtly,

Shew that the ſetting up *oral tradition* as of equal authority with the ſacred Scriptures, has opened the door for the admiſſion of doctrines and precepts into that church, ſubverſive of thoſe delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

The firſt thing to be done, is faithfully to ſtate the tenets of the church of *Rome*, reſpecting *tradition*.—Before the Council of *Trent*, the Word of God contained in the *canonical* books of ſacred Scripture, was received by the Chriſtian Church, and acknowledged, as the *only* rule of faith and practice. All the doctrines to be believed by Chriſtians, and all the duties

Teſtament were *occaſionally* written, and not with a deſign of making them the *only* rule of faith and practice. Many things, ſay they, were *orally* delivered by the Apoſtles, which they did not commit to writing; things of equal authority, and entitled to the ſame reſpect that is due to their writings. That we may not be at a loſs where to find the things *orally delivered*, but *not written*, the *Romaniſts* inform us, that their church, which is the *keeper*, and as occaſion may require, the *publiſher of them*, hath ſafely and infallibly conveyed them down to us by tradition. Theſe traditions, ſay they, were in the church long before ſuch occaſional publications of them. They have, from age to age, been handed down, by the church, from the very Apoſtles themſelves. And the evidence of their being apoſtolical, is as good as that which reſpects the things that the Apoſtles committed to writing. Beſides all this, ſome of the *Romiſh* church maintain, that it appears from the *Scriptures* themſelves, that we ought to ſubmit to the teſtimony of the church, when ſhe declares what things are to be received as articles of faith. We muſt, therefore, believe ſhe truly diſpenſes the traditions received from the Apoſtles; even though the particulars ſhe declares are not to be proved by Scripture. The Council of *Trent* having, in this manner, fitted a rule for their particular purpoſe, laid a foundation for proceeding with eaſe in confirming and proving whatever doctrines and practices they had a mind to eſtabliſh, let them be ever ſo ſuperſtitious, abſurd or impious.

Thoſe who embrace the Reformation agree with the *Romaniſts*, that the Apoſtles taught the Chriſtians

of their day ſeveral things which we do not find in their writings. Could theſe be aſcertained, they would be equal in authority, and entitled to the ſame reverence and reſpect with the apoſtolic writings. But not being committed to writing, they are now loſt. From the Scripture itſelf it is evident, that ſome things taught by the Apoſtles, were not written by them. From St. *Paul*'s telling the *Theſſalonians*,[s] that "they knew what with-held the revelation of the man of ſin," it is manifeſt that he, or ſome other inſpired perſon, had made known to them what was the obſtacle to his being revealed. But this is no where expreſsly declared in the ſacred Scriptures. It would be vain to imagine this to be the only inſtance of apoſtolic inſtruction, not committed to writing: It is highly probable there were other inſtances now loſt. Uncertainty is always the concomitant of thoſe things, which have only *oral tradition* for the means of their conveyance down ſo long a tract of time, as from the apoſtolic age to the preſent day.

Proteſtants are alſo ready to acknowledge, that the chriſtian writers of the firſt ages of the church may ſometimes give light, and lead to the probable ſenſe of ſome text of Scripture, which without ſuch help would be quite obſcure. From the writings of ſome of the Fathers it is probable, that it was the ſtrength and greatneſs of the *Roman* empire, which hindered the revelation of the man of ſin. The diſſolution of that empire was to open a door of entrance to him, when he made his appearance in the world.

Proteſtants allow further, that the *general practice* of the church, where it can be accurately aſcertained, is

[s] 2 Epiſt. ii. 6.

is a good commentary on those texts which treat of the government, discipline or practice of the primitive, christian church.

But notwithstanding these concessions, *Protestants* are far from agreeing with the Council of *Trent*, which declares that the *oral* traditions of the *catholic* church, meaning the *Roman*, were to be received with equal reverence and respect, as the books of the old and new Testament; and that he, who despiseth those traditions, is ACCURSED. On the other hand, the *Protestant* churches maintain the Scriptures of the old and new Testament to be a PERFECT RULE of *faith and practice*. They do not indeed pretend, as has been noticed already, that every thing which was said or done, by our Saviour or his Apostles, is contained in them; or that they lay down particular rules for the management of all the prudential affairs of the christian church. With respect to our Saviour, the Evangelist *John* informs us,[h] "that many other signs were done by Jesus in the presence of his disciples," which are not recorded in the Gospel. And from St. *Paul*'s direction to the *Corinthians*,[i] to "let all things be done decently and in order," it is evident that some of the affairs of that church were left to be managed as their prudence should direct. In like manner, every christian church is at liberty to provide for itself, where no provision is made in the Scriptures. Care, however, must be taken that such provision be *decent* and *orderly*; that it does not transgress any of the rules of the Gospel; nor enjoin any thing as necessary, either to church communion, or to salvation, which is not made so by Christ, the only Legislator of the christian church. *Pro-*

[h] Ch. xx. ver. 30. [i] 1 Epist. xiv. 40.

teſtants only maintain that every thing neceſſary to ſalvation, whether it relates to faith or practice, is either expreſsly contained in the Scriptures, or may by juſt conſequence be deduced from them. As to *oral* tradition, it is eſteemed by them a way of conveyance, from an age ſo diſtant as the apoſtolic, too uncertain to be depended on; eſpecially in conveying down the knowledge of ſuch doctrinal truths, or practical precepts, as are *neceſſary to ſalvation.* And though it muſt be allowed that the revelations made in one age of the world have been leſs perfect than thoſe made in another; the earlier revelations containing fewer articles, and being often leſs perſpicuous than the later, yet the neceſſity of adding *oral tradition* cannot, from this cauſe, be concluſively argued. For God has in every age of the church revealed ALL that was *neceſſary* to be believed and practiſed in each particular age. And he has made his revelations with that degree of *perſpicuity* which was neceſſary compleatly to anſwer all his purpoſes in making them. The chriſtian diſpenſation, being the laſt which is to take place in the world, every article of faith, and every rule of duty, is either expreſsly contained in the ſacred Scriptures of the old and new Teſtament, or may fairly and concluſively be deduced from them. No ſingle perſon, nor any collective bodies of men, have a right to preſcribe any other articles of faith or rules of duty than what are contained in thoſe ſacred writings. Every perſon, whoſe life is properly influenced and governed by the doctrines and precepts of the holy Scriptures, will obtain the mercy of God to eternal life; notwithſtanding he totally diſregards all thoſe *oral traditions* which the church of *Rome* pretends ſhe has conveyed down

down from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, with as much certainty as the ſacred Scriptures have been tranſmitted to us.

That the *Proteſtant* churches have ſufficient reaſon for abiding by their opinion, reſpecting the *perfection of the ſacred Scriptures*, in every thing that concerns our eternal ſalvation; and for rejecting the *authority of oral tradition*, as it is maintained in the *Romiſh* church, may be fairly evinced.—— For,

Oral tradition has, from experience, been found a very uncertain way of conveying the knowledge of doctrinal truths, or matters of fact, through a long ſucceſſion of ages. The longevity of the *Antediluvians* gave them the greateſt advantage for conveying the knowledge of the doctrines and duties of religion to poſterity. Two perſons might have conveyed it down from *Adam* to *Abraham*. For at the death of *Adam*, *Methuſelah* was above three hundred years old. And *Methuſelah* did not die, till *Shem* was almoſt an hundred, who lived above an hundred years after the birth of *Abraham*. Beſides their longevity, the fewneſs of religious truths to be conveyed, gave them every advantage of doing it, with as much certainty as can attend oral tradition. But notwithſtanding theſe advantages, a diſſoluteneſs of manners had ſpread itſelf univerſally among the Antediluvians. And by the time of *Abraham*, the tradition of thoſe few things, in which religion was then comprehended, was ſo corrupted, that God ſaw it neceſſary to correct it by making an immediate revelation to him: And that *Abraham* might not be corrupted by the *idolatry*, which was beginning to prevail

prevail in his father's family, God commanded him to forſake his kindred and his country.——Further,

The *moſaic* inſtitution was attended with many advantages, peculiarly favourable to tradition. The law was ſhort; and it was promulged at Mount *Sinai* with ſolemnities, that excited the wonder and aſtoniſhment of the whole congregation of *Iſrael*. There were many rites and ſeveral feſtivals appointed to keep up the remembrance of it. All the main acts of their religion were to be performed in one place, and by perſons of one family, who were devoted to this particular ſervice. And all the males were obliged to attend the ſervice at the temple three times a year, which kept up a conſtant intercourſe among them. But, notwithſtanding theſe and many other advantages in favour of tradition, that were peculiar to the *moſaic* inſtitution, God did not ſee fit to leave revealed religion to the doubtfulneſs and uncertainty of tradition. For he commanded *Moſes* to write the *whole law*, as he himſelf had, with his own finger, written the *ten commandments* on tables of ſtone.

The traditional method of conveying a revelation, muſt neceſſarily be liable to much uncertainty, ariſing both from involuntary miſtakes, and from deſigned, wilful and malicious falſifications. The credit of a report which paſſes through many hands, depends on the *integrity* and *ſufficiency of all the relators*. Where-ever there is a ſuſpicion that any of them are deficient in either of theſe qualifications, a proportional doubt will be entertained with reſpect to the things reported by them. The effect of an unrecorded revelation can neither be extenſive, nor permanent. It can reach but few perſons; and it cannot retain

retain its full credibility, but for a short time. Was the knowledge of religious truths to be communicated *orally*, for many centuries together, by an innumerable multitude of persons, differing in their capacities, tempers, designs and interests, it would be morally impossible to arrive at any certainty about them.

Protestants further alledge, that the conveyance of the doctrines of Christianity by tradition, would have been attended with difficulties, peculiar to itself. The christian religion was not, like the *mosaic*, confined to one country and nation. It was early propagated into countries very remote from each other, whose inhabitants, differing in language as well as situation, maintained but little intercourse with one another. In such circumstances, had history been silent, it might reasonably have been presumed, that some persons in those distant countries would have corrupted the doctrines of Christianity. When this had taken place, the remoteness of the countries, and the different languages of the inhabitants, would have rendered it extremely difficult to have rectified such mistakes; had the knowledge of Christianity been wholly dependent on tradition. During the lives of the Apostles, a remedy might have been had in such a case. On application to some of them, the question in controversy, might have been decided. But after the decease of the Apostles, had not all the doctrines of christianity been committed to writing, whenever a controversy arose respecting any article of the christian religion, it must have remained undecided; unless it could be proved from the Scriptures that Christ had vested some one person, or some body of men, with power to decide all controversies that should arise

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in the Church, in an authoritative manner. But that he has done so, *Protestants* are not able to find sufficient evidence; notwithstanding all that the *Romanists* have offered to evince that the *Pope*, or a *General Council*, or *both*, are cloathed with such authority. Indeed, the proofs of Christianity are of so complicated a nature, that, were we altogether dependent on tradition for our knowledge of them, they could not have been made out, in so clear and satisfactory a manner, as is requisite to establish articles of faith, and persuade men to embrace them.

Protestants further object, that our Saviour and his Apostles, in their controversies with the Jews, do not ever appeal to tradition, but always to the Scriptures. Our Saviour never submitted to tradition, though it was on many occasions urged against him. On the contrary, he reproached the Jews with making the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions. He told them plainly, that they worshipped God in vain, when they taught for doctrines, the commandments of men. In all his disputations with them, he invariably referred them to the Scriptures, and enjoined it on them to search the Scriptures; founding his injunction on the justness of the persuasion they entertained concerning them. [k] "In them, said he, ye think ye have eternal life, and they are" the very books "that testify of me." Our Saviour never once appeals to tradition, when he is justifying himself, or his doctrine, against the cavils of the Jews. —In like manner, the Apostles constantly make their appeal to the Scriptures, in all their disputes with them. They set a high character on the *Bereans* for their examining the Scriptures, and comparing with them the

[k] John v. 39.

the very doctrines, preached among them by the Apoſtles themſelves. In the epiſtles to the *Romans*, *Galatians* and *Hebrews*, the Apoſtle *Paul* purſues a chain of arguments in oppoſition to the prejudices the Jews had imbibed againſt Chriſtianity. But we do not find him, in theſe epiſtles, deducing ſo much as a ſingle argument from tradition. On the contrary, the merit of the cauſe, conteſted between them, is reſted wholly on evidence, derived from the Scriptures. This ſame Apoſtle, when he is enumerating to *Timothy* the advantages he derived from a religious education, mentions it as an eminent one, [1] "that from a child he had known the HOLY SCRIPTURES, which were able to make him wiſe to Salvation, through faith in Jeſus Chriſt." If the Scriptures have been handed down from the Apoſtles to the preſent time, without corruption in thoſe articles that are neceſſary to ſalvation, either the Apoſtle, or the Church of *Rome*, muſt be miſerably miſtaken. The Apoſtle tells *Timothy*, *they* are able to make him *wiſe to ſalvation*. The Church of *Rome* ſays they are *not ſo*, without the help of thoſe *traditional articles*, which ſhe has been ſo happy as to convey down to us with infallible certainty. Which is entitled to the greateſt credit, the Apoſtle or the Church of *Rome*, will ſcarcely be called in queſtion by any who have not learned the art of believing that an Apoſtle, writing under the guidance of the Holy Ghoſt, can commit an egregious blunder.—When the apoſtle *Peter* knew that his death was approaching, he wrote his ſecond epiſtle for this very end, that his chriſtian brethren "might have theſe things," namely, the doctrines and precepts taught by him and the other Apoſtles, "always in remembrance." But why need he have

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[1] 2 Epiſt. iii. 15.

been ſo ſolicitous to commit thoſe things to writing? Perhaps he never heard, that the Church of *Rome* was ſo highly privileged as to be the keeper and conveyancer of thoſe inſtructions which the Apoſtles, either through hurry of buſineſs, or through careleſſneſs, had neglected to commit to writing. But to be ſerious, neither our Saviour, nor his Apoſtles, give the leaſt hint of their having left any "unwritten word," with the Church, to be by her conveyed down to ſucceeding ages by *oral tradition*: Much leſs have they given the leaſt intimation of their having left any articles *neceſſary to ſalvation*, to be in this manner conveyed down by the Church.

Were theſe the only reaſons for rejecting the traditions of the Church of *Rome*, *Proteſtants* would eſteem themſelves fully juſtified in totally diſregarding them.——But this brings me to obſerve,

That the very ſuppoſal of a neceſſity of adding *oral tradition* to ſcripture revelation, implies ſome *imperfection* in the Scriptures. On this ſuppoſition the Scriptures muſt, either *not contain* all things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed, in order to obtain ſalvation, or elſe *not deliver* the articles of faith and practice with that degree of *perſpicuity*, which was neceſſary compleatly to anſwer all the divine purpoſes in delivering them. Both of theſe have been openly taught and avowed by the *Romaniſts*, even in a Proteſtant country, while they have been attempting to make proſelytes to their Church. In a pamphlet diſperſed in England in the former part of the preſent century, it is aſked, "*Why ſhould not the Scripture* ALONE *be the rule of faith?*" To which the anſwer given is, "*Becauſe ſeveral* NECESSARY ARTICLES *are*

are either NOT AT ALL CONTAINED *in Scripture, or at leaſt are* NOT PLAIN *in the Scripture without the help of tradition.*" But theſe are poſitions, which *Proteſtants* think ought not to be laid down, in order to eſtabliſh the authority of oral tradition.—For,

It may be clearly evinced, that every article of faith and practice, neceſſary to ſalvation, is contained in the Scriptures; even from a conceſſion of the Church of *Rome* itſelf. For that Church allows, " that the Scriptures are to be received by all chriſtians as the INFALLIBLE *word of* GOD." Now this infallible word declares, [m] " that all Scripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed to all good works." If by the man of God is to be underſtood a *Paſtor* or *Teacher* in the chriſtian Church, then the Scripture is given to *perfect* him for his office; and *throughly* to furniſh him to all good works, belonging to his ſtation. Or ſhould the man of God be ſuppoſed to refer to a *private chriſtian*, then the deſign of the Scripture is to make him perfect, and throughly to furniſh him to all good works; compleatly qualifying him for the faithful diſcharge of all the duties of his chriſtian profeſſion. On either ſuppoſition it will follow, that all neceſſary articles of faith and practice are contained in the Scriptures. For they are profitable for *doctrine*, teaching us to form juſt thoughts of the divine Majeſty and of ourſelves. They alſo teach us the way in which ſinful man may become reconciled to God. They are profitable for *reproof*, for all the errors and falſe doctrines which have at any time been propagated, may

[m] 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

be confuted by them. They are profitable for *correction*, for they lay the ſtricteſt prohibition on every kind of wickedneſs and on every degree of immorality. By convincing men of their ſins and their faults, they become the means of correcting them. They are profitable for *inſtruction* in *righteouſneſs*, teaching all the rules of righteouſneſs, even all the duties incumbent on chriſtians. The Scriptures are ſo perfect for all theſe ends, as fully to anſwer the deſign of God in giving them; which was, that *the man of God*, whether he be a teacher in the church, or only a private chriſtian, may *be made perfect, throughly furniſhed to all good works*. Now, ſhould it be admitted, that the Scriptures do not contain every article of faith and practice, neceſſary to ſalvation, it will follow, either that the man of God may be *perfect* without the knowledge of ſome *neceſſary* articles of chriſtianity; or elſe, that God did not know what would be ſufficient to make him *perfect*. The former is a ſelf-evident contradiction. To ſuppoſe the latter of Him, whoſe underſtanding is infinite, would be as fooliſh as it is blaſphemous.

Indeed from the whole current of the Scriptures we are led to conclude, that all the neceſſary articles of faith and practice are contained in them. The Apoſtle John informs us, in the cloſe of his goſpel,[a] that "theſe things were written, that we might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God; and and that believing *we might have life* through his name." So again in his firſt epiſtle[b] he ſays, "theſe things have I written unto you——that ye might know that ye have eternal life." Now, ſince the deſign of the Scriptures is to make known the way to eternal life; and ſince from them we may be certain

[a] Ch. xx. 31. [b] Ch. v. 13.

certain that we are entitled to it, it is evident that they muſt contain all the articles neceſſary to ſalvation. There can be no occaſion for the help of *oral tradition*, to add any thing to *their perfection*.

Should any thing then be taught by a miniſter of the goſpel, or decreed by a particular church, as neceſſary to ſalvation, which is not to be found in expreſs words in the Scriptures, nor to be deduced from them by juſt conſequence, it may ſafely be rejected; it cannot be an article of our holy religion. All ſuch additions are mere perverſions of the goſpel of Chriſt. The goſpel was ſo fully preached by the Apoſtles themſelves, that St. *Paul* ſcruples not to denounce a moſt ſolemn curſe againſt either an *Apoſtle*, or an *Angel from Heaven*, who ſhould preſume to preach a goſpel different from that which had been preached by him. [p] "Though *we*, ſays he, or an *Angel from Heaven*, preach any other goſpel, than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be* ACCURSED." To impreſs this the more, on the minds of the *Galatians* in the firſt place, and then on the minds of all who ſhould read this epiſtle, it is immediately repeated, [q] "As we ſaid before, ſo ſay I now again, if any man preach any other goſpel unto you, than that which ye have received, *let him be* ACCURSED." Surely then thoſe of the *Romiſh* communion, who declare there are ſeveral *neceſſary* things, *not* contained in the Scriptures, have reaſon to fear leſt this apoſtolic curſe ſhould come upon them. Till they can prove that ſuch *additional articles* were *orally* delivered by the Apoſtles themſelves; that they ſtand on as good evidence, as thoſe articles do, which the Apoſtles committed to writing; and that

[p] Gal. i. 8. [q] verſe 9.

that the church has handed them down from the Apoſtles, pure and free from corruption, *Proteſtants* will eſteem themſelves fully juſtified in rejecting them.

Should the *Romaniſts*, to free themſelves from the charge of inconſiſtency and ſelf-contradiction, reply, "That the church of *Rome* allows the ſufficiency of Scripture to *perfect* the man of God, provided Scripture be interpreted as the *catholic*, meaning the *Roman* church, directs; and that there be alſo a holding faſt *thoſe traditions*, to which the *written word refers*," it will not anſwer their purpoſe. This written word declares, that *as written* it is profitable for all the afore-mentioned purpoſes. The *Romaniſts* affirm there are *other articles*, not contained in it, preſerved by the church and handed down by tradition, which are *equally neceſſary* to thoſe ends. Now to aſſert, that the *written word* of God is infallibly true, which declares that the Scriptures are able to make men *wiſe to ſalvation through faith in Jeſus Chriſt*, and to make the man of God *perfect*; and at the ſame time to aſſert, that they are *not able*, without the addition of ſome *other* NECESSARY *articles*, carries ſo much the appearance of abſurdity and ſelf-contradiction, that it will require no ſmall ſhare of the art and ſubtilty of a *Jeſuit* to free ſuch aſſertions from it.

To palliate this inconſiſtency, the *Romaniſts* plead, 'that the Scriptures themſelves refer to *traditions*, which are to be held faſt, as well as the things that are written.' To this purpoſe they quote a paſſage from the ſecond epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*: [r] "Therefore,

[r] Ch. ii. 15.

fore, brethren, ſtand faſt, and hold the *traditions* which ye have been taught, whether by *word*, or our *epiſtle*." Upon this paſſage one of their writers makes this obſervation. "Hence it is clear, that *ſome traditions* were delivered to the *Theſſalonians* by *word of mouth*, and thoſe of EQUAL *authority* with what was *written*, if not more; for the Holy Ghoſt doth name them *firſt*, as they were indeed the firſt in being." ‡ And *Bellarmine* ſaith, "that the Apoſtle commands that they *no leſs* obſerve what they had received WITHOUT *writing*, than what they had received by *epiſtle*." To juſtify their interpretation of this text, and to ſhew its pertinency to the point for which it is alledged, it is incumbent on the *Romaniſts* to make it evident, that the *traditions* which the *Theſſalonians* were taught by *word*, were different from thoſe taught by *epiſtle*; and that thoſe *verbal traditions* were never committed to *writing*, by perſons under the guidance of the holy Spirit; but left with the church to be carefully preſerved and delivered down *orally* to ſucceeding ages, as circumſtances may require. To ſet the matter in a juſt point of light, it may be obſerved, that whatever *traditions neceſſary to ſalvation* the Apoſtle delivered to the *Theſſalonians* by EPISTLE, the ſame he had before delivered to them by *word of mouth*. *Bellarmine* himſelf is conſtrained to acknowledge, "that without doubt the Apoſtle had *fully preached the whole goſpel* to them." The traditions, then, referred to in the text, were ſuch as the *Theſſalonians* had been taught *before*, by the ſame Spirit and by the ſame perſon, who indited this epiſtle. Whereas the *Romaniſts* refer to *traditions* of which no traces can be found for *ſeveral hundred years* after the whole canon of Scripture was

‡ Touchſtone of the reformed Goſpel.

was compleated. Now it is readily granted, that where the things *ſpoken* are the ſame with thoſe afterwards *written*, they are of equal authority. For the authority of divine truths is not at all affected by the manner in which the knowledge of them is communicated. The Apoſtle, however, by joining *word* and *letter* together, does not deſign to inſinuate that the things taught them by *letter* were *different* from what he had before taught them by *word of mouth*. For in the 5th verſe of this very chapter, wherein he charges them to hold faſt the *traditions* they had been taught, he expreſsly aſſerts that what he was then actually writing, he had told them before. "Remember ye not, ſays he, that when I was yet with you, I told you theſe things." Whereas the *Romaniſts* bring this text to ſupport the authority of ſuch traditions as enjoin things not commanded in Scripture, or elſe ſuch as alter the plain ſenſe of it, and even ſuch as expreſsly contradict it.

Should it be admitted that the paſſage under conſideration refers to traditions, which at that time were not committed to writing; yet it will not ſerve the purpoſe, for which the *Romaniſts* alledge it. For, at the time the Apoſtle gave this injunction to the *Theſſalonians*, there was but a ſmall part of the New-Teſtament committed to writing. Probably the epiſtle to the church of *Antioch*, recorded Acts xv. the two epiſtles to the *Theſſalonians*, and the goſpels of *Matthew* and *Mark*, were the only books of the New-Teſtament extant at that time. Now, it will not, ſurely, follow becauſe, when things were in ſuch a ſituation, the Apoſtle commanded the *Theſſalonians* to hold faſt what they had been taught by *word*, that

that other things, neceſſary to ſalvation, were left *unwritten*, to be handed down by *oral tradition*, after the canon of Scripture was compleat.

Should the modern *Romaniſt* reply with Cardinal *Perron*, "We muſt not anſwer that S. *Paul* ſpeaks here *only* of ſuch traditions, which, though not in his epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*, yet were *afterwards written*, and in other books of Scripture; becauſe it is upon occaſion of tradition touching the *cauſe of the hindrance of the coming of Antichriſt*, which was NEVER WRITTEN, that this injunction is laid down;" ſhould the *Romaniſt* make this reply, the *Proteſtant* is ready to rejoin, that if the tradition there referred to, which the *Theſſalonians* had ſuch a ſolemn charge to hold faſt, *be yet* LOST, becauſe it was not committed to writing, we can have little or no reaſon to pay any regard to other oral traditions, which are no ways concerned in the apoſtolic injunction. This very plea of the Cardinal furniſhes us with a good reaſon why the church of *Rome* or even the *catholic* Church, ſhould not be eſteemed a ſure preſerver of oral traditions. It is, indeed, a concluſive argument againſt all pretenſions of that kind. This text, then, can never be admitted by *Proteſtants* as evidence ſufficient to convince them, that "the traditions of the *Romiſh* Church are to be received with equal piety and reverence as the books of the old and new Teſtament."

In like manner the other texts urged by the Romaniſts in favour of the traditions of their Church, are far from proving that any obligation lays on chriſtians to pay the leaſt regard to them. Theſe texts relate *only* to the things *delivered by the Apoſtles themſelves*; and have no concern with the traditions

of *after-ages*. The bare reading them is sufficient to confute the *Popish* interpretation of them. St. *Paul* says to the *Corinthians*,[s] "I praise you, brethren, that you remember *me* in all things, and keep the ordinances [or traditions] as *I* delivered them unto you." According to the *Romanists*, instead of remembering the *Apostle*, we must remember and reverence the *authority* of the *church*; and instead of keeping the traditions which the *Apostle* delivered, who on another occasion tells them, that what he delivered to them, he received of the Lord, we must keep those traditions which the *Church* delivers. —— Again, St. *Paul* says,[t] "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the *tradition* which *he received of* US." This US the *Romanists* apply to *their Church*, and urge this text in proof that Christians ought to receive *their traditions*; such as were delivered to them; *not* indeed by the *Apostles*, but by *Councils* and *Popes* several hundred years after the canon of Scripture was settled. — The same Apostle charges *Timothy*[u] to "hold fast the *form of sound words* which thou hast been taught of ME, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." By the *form of sound words* the Romanists understand all the *traditionary articles* of faith in their Church, though they are not to be found in the Apostle's writings. And instead of holding them in *faith* and *love*, they are to be held *without love or mercy* to all such as differ from them. — Once more, the Apostle directs *Timothy*, saying, [x] "The things which thou hast heard of ME among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." These things the *Romanists*

[s] 1 Epist. xi. 2. [t] 2 Thess. iii. 6. [u] 2 Tim. i. 13. [x] 2 Tim. ii. 2.

Romaniſts pretend were committed to *them* ONLY. If ſo, either *Timothy*, or the perſons to whom he committed the things which he heard of the Apoſtle, were miſerably miſtaken in making choice of thoſe of the *Romiſh* church, as *faithful men*, fit to be entruſted with the things taught by the Apoſtle. For the *Romiſh* clergy have abundantly proved themſelves quite unfaithful to the truſt repoſed in them. They have done ſo, by with-holding what is truly *apoſtolical*; and by delivering for *apoſtolical*, things that are moſt directly *oppoſite* to the Scriptures.

Till the Romaniſts are able to produce ſome better evidence than any that has yet been offered by them, *Proteſtants* will find it hard to perſuade themſelves, that *ſeveral articles neceſſary to ſalvation are* NOT AT ALL CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES: Much leſs will they be convinced by the evidence adduced by them, that the traditions of the church of *Rome* merit equal reverence with the ſacred Scriptures.

The other reaſon aſſigned by the Romaniſts, "Why the Scripture *alone* ought not to be the rule of faith," is, "becauſe ſeveral *neceſſary articles* are NOT PLAIN in the Scripture without the *help of tradition*." In proof of this, they alledge the authority of St. *Peter*, who hath aſſured us, [y] "there are ſome things in St. *Paul*'s epiſtles *hard to be underſtood*, which they that are unlearned and unſtable *wreſt*, as they do alſo the other Scriptures, to *their own deſtruction*" From this text the *Romaniſts* conclude, that the *unlearned* part of mankind are in more danger of being hurt by having the Scriptures to read, than by being denied the uſe of them. Such ſtreſs has been laid upon it by ſome of their writers, that on the authority of this paſſage *alone*, they have determined "the Scrip-

 tures

[y] 2 Pet. iii. 16.

tures not to be ſufficiently clear in all points wherein our ſalvation is concerned; but that the miſunderſtanding and miſinterpreting them, may endanger our eternal ſalvation."

On the other hand, Proteſtants allow that an equal degree of *perſpicuity* does not attend all parts of the ſacred Scriptures; that they contain ſome things of a very *abſtruſe* nature, which after all our care and pains, we ſhall not be able fully to comprehend. They do not, indeed, maintain that the articles neceſſary to ſalvation are treated with an equal degree of plainneſs in every place, where they are mentioned. For it ſufficiently anſwers all the purpoſes of religion, if thoſe things which are handled but *obſcurely* in ſome places, are treated of with *perſpicuity* in others. Neither do they pretend, but that perſons of corrupt and vicious diſpoſitions, who ſtudy the Scriptures under ſuch a biaſs, though they do it with conſiderable attention, may fall into ſome fundamental errors or miſtakes. Neither do they affirm, that the things neceſſary to ſalvation, are delivered in ſo plain a manner, as to be underſtood without uſing ſuch helps as are neceſſary to underſtand other books and things of equal antiquity.—But Proteſtants do, indeed, maintain that every article of faith and practice, neceſſary to ſalvation, is delivered in ſo *clear* and *intelligible* a manner in the ſacred Scriptures, that every perſon who ſtudies them with a firm reſolution to yield his aſſent to every doctrine, plainly revealed in them, and to practiſe all the duties they enjoin, will be preſerved from every fatal error, and led into the knowledge of all neceſſary truth: Provided he uſes all the helps which God in his providence affords him, and joins his fervent and perſevering prayer to God for a bleſſing on his endeavours.

Proteſtants

Proteſtants are fully perſuaded they do not aſcribe this degree of *perſpicuity* to the ſacred Scriptures without ſufficient reaſon. For the moral precepts of Chriſtianity contain every thing of the kind to be found in the writings of the Heathen, without any of the imperfections that attended them; and they are delivered with ſo much plainneſs as to exclude all doubt, reſpecting the duties incumbent on us. Thoſe doctrines of Chriſtianity, which we are able fully to comprehend, are conſonant to our natural notions of the Deity; and thoſe which are too ſublime to be fully comprehended, appear, as far as we are able to apprehend them, worthy of God to reveal. Both one and the other have a direct tendency to inculcate holineſs; and by that means to qualify mankind for the enjoyment of everlaſting felicity. If the articles of faith and practice, neceſſary to ſalvation, are not *clearly* and *intelligibly* revealed in the ſacred Scriptures, mankind have yet to learn the way to everlaſting life.

Proteſtants are alſo fully perſuaded, that the *perſpicuity* of the Scriptures in all neceſſary articles, may be fairly argued from the *deſign of God in making a revelation of his will.* From a paſſage already cited it appears, that the expreſs deſign of God in giving the holy Scriptures by divine revelation, was "that the man of God may be *perfect*, throughly furniſhed to all good works." Now ſhould it be granted that the Scriptures, conſidered as a rule of faith and practice, are *abſolutely perfect*; yet if this rule be delivered in ſuch dark and intricate terms, as to be unintelligible to the very perſons, for whoſe uſe it was deſigned, it certainly can be *no rule to them.* On ſuch a ſuppoſition, neither their faith, nor their practice, could be regulated by it. It cannot be imagined that

that God, who is not only our *Maſter*, but our *kind and compaſſionate Father*, ſhould give us a rule of conduct, incapable of being comprehended. To aſcribe ſuch a conduct to him, would be to ſuppoſe him, either incapable of revealing the things that concern our ſalvation in an intelligible manner; or elſe, miſtaken in thinking he had revealed them with ſufficient clearneſs, when he had done it in a manner above our comprehenſion. The former ſuppoſition would be a direct impeachment of the power of God, and the latter of his wiſdom.

Proteſtants further argue the *perſpicuity* of the Scriptures from the *teſtimony of the Scriptures concerning themſelves*. To this purpoſe are the words of *Moſes* to the *Iſraelites*. [a] "This commandment, ſays he, which I command thee this day, is *not hidden* from thee, neither is it far off. But the word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayſt do it." The royal Pſalmiſt aſſures us, [b] that "the ſtatutes of the Lord are *right*; the commandment of the Lord is *pure, enlightening the eyes*; [c] that the word of God was a *lamp* to his feet, and a *light* to his path; [d] and that through meditating on the divine law, he had more underſtanding than all his *teachers*." The apoſtle *Peter* [e] enjoins it on us to "give heed to the word of prophecy, as to a *light ſhining* in a dark place, till the day dawn and the day-ſtar ariſe in our heart." The evangeliſt *John* tells us, [f] that "his goſpel was written that we might *believe* that Jeſus was the Chriſt; and that believing, we might *have life* through his name." And the Apoſtle *Paul* affirms, [g] that "the holy Scriptures are able to make us *wiſe* unto ſalvation." Now unleſs the Scriptures are *clear* enough

[a] Deut. xxx. 11, 14. [b] Pſ. xix. 8. [c] Pſ. cxix. 105. [d] v. 99.
[e] 2 Epiſt. i. 19. [f] Ch. xx. 31. [g] 2 Tim. iii. 15.

enough to be underſtood, we cannot be the *wiſer* for them; and unleſs they are ſo, in all *neceſſary points*, they cannot make us wiſe unto ſalvation.

From theſe evidences of the *perſpicuity* of ſacred Scriptures, the preſumption is ſtrong that the *Romaniſts* make a falſe inference from the words of St. *Peter*, who ſays [h] that "in the epiſtles of *Paul* there are ſome things *hard to be underſtood*, which the unlearned and unſtable *wreſt*, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own deſtruction;" when they conclude from them, that the Scriptures are *not ſufficiently clear* in all points, wherein our ſalvation is concerned; but that "the miſunderſtanding and miſinterpreting them, may endanger our eternal ſalvation." And that they have actually made a falſe inference, will appear from an attentive conſideration of the paſſage itſelf. For,

The very thing which the *Romaniſts* bring this text to *diſprove*, is evidently implied in the words of the Apoſtle. It is only *ſome things* in the epiſtles of *Paul* and in the other Scriptures, that are *hard to be underſtood*. The *other things*, therefore, are *clear* and *intelligible*. There is no danger of miſunderſtanding them; provided they are ſtudied with care and attention, together with a fixed determination to *do*, as well as to *know the will of God*. There is not the leaſt occaſion of keeping the Scriptures from the common people; for the Apoſtle allowed the free uſe of them to the *unlearned*, otherwiſe they could not have *wreſted* them. ——Further,

Thoſe who are called *unlearned* and *unſtable* by the Apoſtle, were not ſuch as are called ſo by the *Romaniſts* in this controverſy. They were not ſuch perſons as, in modern times, are eſteemed *unlearned*; namely,

[h] 2 Pet. iii. 16.

namely, perſons unacquainted with the liberal arts and ſciences: But they were ſuch as had not learned the *fundamental points of religion*, and were unſettled in the *principles of Chriſtianity*. They were perſons of the ſame character with thoſe whom St. *Paul* compares [1] to "children toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Such unſtable perſons may eaſily be ſuppoſed capable of *miſunderſtanding*, and even of *wreſting* the Scriptures to *their own deſtruction*; notwithſtanding that every article, neceſſary to ſalvation, is delivered with all needful plainneſs. To apply the words, therefore, to the *illiterate part of mankind in general*, and not to thoſe who are unlearned and unſettled in the principles of Chriſtianity, is a ſhameful perverſion of them.

It is worthy of notice, that the Apoſtle does not forbid theſe very men the *uſe of the Scriptures*, or even the reading the things *hard to be underſtood*. Their deſtruction was not owing to their reading them, but was wholly occaſioned by their *wreſting* and *abuſing them*. Now, ſince the Apoſtle does not order the Scriptures to be kept from perſons, who ſo groſsly abuſed them, we may ſafely conclude that he never intended they ſhould be kept from the *common people in general*; merely becauſe ſome perſons in every age might probably abuſe them, as the *unſtable* then did. The true inference to be drawn from this text is directly contrary to the concluſion of the *Romaniſts*. Inſtead of denying the common people the free uſe of the Scriptures, they ought rather to be exhorted to ſtudy them with the greater care, diligence and humility; leſt they ſhould be left to pervert them to their own deſtruction, as the unlearned and unſtable did in the days of the Apoſtle.

It

[1] Eph. iv. 14.

It may be obſerved further, that the things which the Apoſtle ſays are *hard to be underſtood*, and which were *wreſted* by ſome to their deſtruction, are things, of which Chriſtians may in ſome meaſure be ignorant, without *endangering* their ſalvation. They are not, as the *Romaniſts* maintain, things *neceſſary to ſalvation*, which are ſpoken of, either with reſpect to *Paul's* epiſtles, or to the other Scriptures. *Peter* had been treating, in the context, of the *new heavens* and the *new earth*, and of the *diſſolution of the world* at the ſecond viſible coming of Chriſt. Concerning theſe ſubjects, which are alſo treated of in the other Scriptures, there are ſeveral things confeſſedly *hard to be underſtood*. But then, it is not neceſſary, that the humble, believing Chriſtian ſhould fully underſtand them, in order to his being ſaved at Chriſt's ſecond appearance. A general expectation of thoſe things, where there cannot be a full comprehenſion of them, will ſo influence the heart and life of a pious Chriſtian, that he will be found of his Judge in peace.

Further, there being ſome things in the Scriptures *hard to be underſtood*, ought not to be made an objection againſt their perſpicuity and utility. Some ſubjects, in their own nature, are more difficult than others; and require more ſtudy and attention to underſtand them. Notwithſtanding ſuch ſubjects are handled with juſtneſs and propriety, and with as much perſpicuity as they will admit, yet to haſty and inconſiderate perſons there may be ſome things concerning them, hard to be underſtood. This is frequently the caſe with the moſt judicious and accurate compoſitions. But then it muſt be remembered, that the oftener and the more carefully ſuch compoſitions are read, the better will they be underſtood, and the

more will they be admired. And this is a glory that does, by way of eminence, belong to the ſacred Scriptures.

It is alſo worthy our obſervation, that the difficult paſſages of Scripture which have been abuſed by ſome, have had a very good effect on others, even in the lower claſſes of life. By endeavouring to attain a competent knowledge of ſuch paſſages, they have been led into a more thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures in general; and have had their lives ſuitably influenced by the important truths contained in them. Since theſe have been the happy effects of ſtudying the *abſtruſe* parts of Scripture, we may ſafely abide by the *Proteſtant* doctrine, that THE SCRIPTURES ARE SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR AND PERSPICUOUS IN ALL POINTS THAT IMMEDIATELY CONCERN OUR ETERNAL SALVATION.

Were the tenets of the Church of *Rome*, reſpecting tradition, merely the private ſentiments of ſome ſpeculative men in that church, they would not have deſerved the notice we have taken of them. But when they are conſidered as the chief ſupports of that amazing fabrick of worldly policy, which the Pope and his clergy have reared upon the foundation of Chriſt and the Apoſtles, they cannot undergo too ſtrict an examination. *Tradition*, or *traditive* interpretations of Scripture, lie as the foundation of all the diſtinguiſhing tenets of *Popery*. The Church of *Rome*, finding that, in many inſtances, ſhe failed of plain ſcriptural evidence to prove her avowed articles of faith, and to juſtify the practices ſhe had adopted, has diſcovered her worldly wiſdom, by declaring *tradition* to be of equal authority with the Scriptures. However, by doing ſo, ſhe has admitted to her boſom,

boſom, doctrines and precepts, ſubverſive of thoſe inculcated by Chriſt and his Apoſtles. By means of her traditions, ſhe has made the commandment of God of none effect.

In the bull of *Pope* PIUS IV. bearing date at *Rome*, A. D. 1564, printed with the acts of the Council of *Trent*, a FORM OF FAITH is drawn up, which was extracted from the decrees of that Council. This form of faith, every one, who enters into holy orders, is bound by ſolemn oath not only to believe, but to maintain and defend, and teach the people under his charge; and that under pain of the diſpleaſure of Almighty God, and his holy Apoſtles *Peter* and *Paul*. This *creed* is the ſtandard of modern *Popery*, and the laſt twelve articles of it contain the diſtinguiſhing tenets of the *Romiſh* Church. Theſe I ſhall now rehearſe: For the rehearſal of them, without any commentary, will be ſufficient to juſtify the charge we bring againſt that church, of making the commandments of God of none effect by her traditions. The articles are as follows.

"Article XIII. I moſt firmly admit and embrace apoſtolical and eccleſiaſtical traditions, and all other obſervations and conſtitutions of the ſame church.

XIV. I do admit the holy Scriptures in the ſame ſenſe that holy mother-church doth, whoſe buſineſs it is to judge of the true ſenſe and interpretation of them; and I will interpret them according to the unanimous conſent of the fathers.

XV. I do profeſs and believe that there are ſeven ſacraments of the new law truly and properly ſo called, inſtituted by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, and neceſſary to the ſalvation of mankind, though not all of them to every one, *viz.* Baptiſm, Confirmation,

Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, Marriage; and that they do confer grace; and that of these, Baptism, Confirmation and Orders, may not be repeated without sacrilege. I do also receive and admit the received and approved rites of the catholic church in her solemn administration of the abovesaid sacraments.

XVI. I do embrace and receive all and every thing that hath been defined and declared by the holy Council of *Trent* concerning original sin and justification.

XVII. I do also profess, that in the Mass there is offered unto God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the quick and the dead, and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is a conversion made of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood; which conversion the catholic church calls TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

XVIII. I confess that under one kind only, whole and entire Christ, and a true sacrament, is taken and received.

XIX. I do firmly believe that there is a *Purgatory*, and that the souls, kept prisoners there, do receive help by the suffrages of the faithful.

XX. I do likewise believe, that the Saints reigning together with Christ, are to be worshipped and prayed unto; and that they do offer prayers unto God for us; and that their reliques are to be had in veneration.

XXI. I do most firmly assert, that the Images of Christ, of the blessed Virgin, the Mother of God; and of other Saints, ought to be had and retained; and that due honour and veneration ought to be given to them.

XXII.

XXII. I do affirm, that the power of Indulgences was left by Chriſt in the Church; and that the uſe of them is very beneficial to chriſtian people.

XXIII. I do acknowledge the holy, catholic, and apoſtolic *Roman* Church, to be the Mother and Miſtreſs of all Churches; and I do promiſe and ſwear true obedience to the Biſhop of *Rome*, the ſucceſſor of St. *Peter*, the Prince of the Apoſtles, and Vicar of Jeſus Chriſt.

XXIV. I do undoubtedly receive and profeſs *all other things*, which have been delivered, defined and declared by the ſacred Canons and œcumenical Councils, and eſpecially by the holy Synod of *Trent*; and all things contrary thereunto, and all hereſies condemned, rejected and anathematiſed by theChurch, I do likewiſe condemn, reject and anathematiſe."

Including theſe articles, there are above 100 points of doctrine laid down by the Council of *Trent*, of which no traces can be found in the Scriptures. To be conſiſtent with itſelf, the Council hath denounced an *anathema* upon all ſuch as do not believe them. To point out the repugnancy of the aforementioned articles to the ſacred Scriptures, would exceed the limits aſſigned to this diſcourſe. It muſt, therefore, be left for the employment of ſome future lecturers.

The preſent diſcourſe cannot be cloſed better, than by reciting a memorable paſſage from *Chillingworth*'s proof that *Proteſtants are no hereticks*. *Chillingworth*, who had been *converted* from *Popery* by STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES, addreſſing himſelf to a writer of the *Roman* Church, does, in this ſummary manner, plead the Proteſtant cauſe.

" Know then, Sir, that when I ſay the religion of *Proteſtants* is in prudence to be preferred before *yours*; as

as on the one side I do not understand by your religion the doctrine of *Bellarmine* or *Baronius*, or any other private man amongst you, nor the doctrine of the *Sorbonne* or of the Jesuits, or of the *Dominicans*, or of any other particular company among you; but that wherein you all agree, or profess to agree, *the doctrine of* the Council of *Trent*: So accordingly on the other side, by the *religion* of *Protestants*, I do not understand the doctrine of *Luther*, or *Calvin*, or *Melancton*, nor the confession of *Augusta*, or *Geneva*, nor the *Catechism* of *Heidelberg*, nor the articles of the *Church of England*, no, nor the harmony of Protestant confessions; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with greater harmony, as a *perfect rule* of their faith and actions, that is the BIBLE.

"The BIBLE, I say, the BIBLE *only*, is the religion of Protestants, whatsoever else they believe besides it: And the plain, irrefragable, and indisputable *consequences* of it, well may they hold as matter of *opinion*; but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and schismatical presumption. I for my part, after a long, and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the *true way* to *eternal happiness*, do profess plainly that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but upon this rock only.

"I plainly see, and with mine own eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age, the Church of one age against the Church of another age: Traditive interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there

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are few, or none to be found: No tradition but only of the Scripture, can derive itſelf from the fountain, but may be plainly proved to be brought in, in ſuch an age after Chriſt, or that ſuch an age it was not in. In a word, there is no ſufficient *certainty* but of SCRIPTURE *only*, for any conſidering man to build upon. *This* therefore, and *this only*, I have reaſon to believe: *This* I will profeſs, according to *this* I will live, and for *this*, if there be occaſion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly, loſe my life, though I ſhould be ſorry that Chriſtians ſhould take it from me.

"Propoſe me any thing out of this book, and require whether I believe it or no, and ſeem it never ſo incomprehenſible to human reaſon, I will ſubſcribe it with hand and heart, as knowing no demonſtration can be ſtronger than this, GOD HATH SAID SO, THEREFORE IT IS TRUE. In other things, I will take no man's liberty of judging from him; neither ſhall any man take mine from me. I will think no man the worſe *man*, nor the worſe *chriſtian*, I will love no man *the leſs*, for differing in opinion from me. And what meaſure I mete to others, I expect from them again. I am fully aſſured that God *does* not, and therefore men *ought* not to require any more of any man than this, *to believe the Scripture to be God's word, to endeavour to find out the true ſenſe of it, and to live according to it.*"

That all, who receive their education in this place, may do ſo, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Mr. BARNARD'S

DUDLEIAN LECTURE

SERMON.

THE

Power of God, the Proof of *Chriſtianity*.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE

DUDLEIAN Lecture,

IN THE

CHAPEL of HARVARD COLLEGE,

CAMBRIDGE, N. E.

MAY 11th, 1768.

By THOMAS BARNARD, A. M.

PASTOR of the Firſt CHURCH in SALEM.

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M.DCC.LXVIII.

A DUDLEIAN LECTURE

SERMON.

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1 CORINTHIANS, II. 5.

"*That your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God.*"

THE pious and benevolent Founder of theſe lectures, having limited the preachers of this ſecond in the ſeries, to the ſubject of Chriſtianity in the moſt preciſe idea of it; we are called to review it, and diſcourſe upon it, as the plan of ſupreme wiſdom for the reſtoring a degenerate race to virtue and to glory;—by enlightning human darkneſs;—by reclaiming the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt;—by rendring the happineſs of offenders conſiſtent with the perfect purity of the ſupreme Governor;—by aboliſhing death, and reſtoring thoſe ſubjected to it to immortality; that plan "which eye had not before ſeen, nor ear heard, nor had it entred into the heart of man to conceive of;" a plan executed at ſuch a time, in ſuch a manner, and by ſuch inſtruments, as to Him, the all-perfect ſource of it, ſeemed beſt, and which is therefore on all accounts beſt.

IN

In order to men's becoming partakers of the benefits of this plan of grace, they muſt themſelves be active. Not indeed in completely informing themſelves, as from their own proper fund, of every article which conduces to their virtue or their hopes; (many of theſe muſt be derived immediately from him by whoſe good pleaſure alone they exiſt, and offered from him to the human mind;) but in examining the evidence, by which whatever claims to be divine truth, ſupports its claim—in receiving it in the love of it—and in being ſanctified by it.

Therefore thoſe who would attain the bleſſings of the goſpel, and experience it to be "the power of God unto ſalvation," muſt be perſuaded of the truth of *Chriſtianity properly ſo called*; and the queſtion ariſes, How ſhall men arrive to this perſuaſion, which is in our text termed *faith?* Now St. Paul affirms that this faith or perſuaſion hath not it's foundation on, or it's exiſtence in or by the "wiſdom of men, but the power of God."

I shall at preſent take it for granted, that the phraſe, "the wiſdom of men," means the diſquiſitions of philoſophers, (eſpecially as retailed in the harangues of orators and rhetoricians;) the terms, "wiſe men of this world," "the ſcribe," "the diſputer," "the natural man," point out thoſe who refuſe to receive any thing as divine truth, but what they become acquainted with in the ſame proceſs, thro' which they are informed of the principles of any other ſcience.

I further

I FURTHER aſſume here, and refer my hearers to the courſe of the former part of this epiſtle for the juſtice of the conſtruction; that the apoſtle intends by "faith" the aſſent of the mind to thoſe propoſitions which are offered to our aſſent from the fountain of truth, though their abſtract nature, reaſon and foundation, did not before, or do not now, fully appear to the mind. (In other parts of the goſpel, however, 'tis plain that the word "faith" includes in it's idea an inward, cordial reception of, and reliance upon, Jeſus Chriſt, in all his offices; and in other places, in a yet larger ſenſe, the whole Chriſtian temper and life is deſcribed under this comprehenſive word "faith.")

AND laſtly, I think it plain, that by the expreſſions, "the power of God," "demonſtration of the Spirit," and "ſpiritual diſcernment," he deſigns that evidence of miracles and it's influence, which the preachers of Chriſt adduced, as full proof of their being immediately employed of God to promulge thoſe truths, and upon which evidence thoſe they were ſent to were bound to embrace them, and act upon them.

FROM this review of our context it may appear, that we are led to lay down ſome truths as premiſes, from which the juſtice of our text as a concluſion will follow. I lay it down then as clear, that the perſon who will aſſent to nothing but what he is intuitively certain of, or convinced of by abſtract reaſoning, muſt remain ignorant of many and very intereſting truths. That therefore in this ſtate of imperfection and ſin, men need to have much religious knowledge conveyed to them in

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ſome other way. Chriſtianity fully relieves us under this unhappineſs, this neceſſity. It relieves us by "faith" in it as a divine revelation. And we are induced to this "faith" by the teſtimony of God; the exertion of his power to warrant the divine miſſion of its founders. Therefore it is "ſpiritually diſcerned." "Our faith ſtandeth not in the wiſdom of men, but the power of God."

I. THE firſt part of my buſineſs, then, will be to illuſtrate and confirm this point; That notwithſtanding the various avenues to religious knowledge, yet there are important articles of ſpeculation and motives to practice, which men in the beſt improvement of the powers of their minds cannot attain to; (to which I ſhall add) and many more, which, in a ſtate of nature, men had but little or no knowledge of.

WE are beings, *my hearers*, of limited capacities; there are bounds we cannot paſs. Within thoſe bounds there are three diſtinct avenues by which truth enters the mind, and is acknowledged by it. They are, intuition, diſcuſſion or reaſoning, and teſtimony.

INTUITION is the direct view the ſoul has of the truth and reality of any one, or the relation of any two or more ideas, that they are ſo immediate as neither to need nor admit of any reaſoning to diſcover it. *

WHEN

* THE propoſition, "I am," is intuitively certain; and to argue, "I think therefore I am," is trifling logick. And where one conceives juſtly of God and man, it lies equally clear in the mind, that men are the ſubjects of the moral government of God. Perhaps alſo the idea of cauſe and effect, is among all created

When ſelf-evident principles fail us, we apply to reaſoning, and come by an indefinite number of ſteps, in proportion as truth lies near or more remote from intuition, to low probability or moral certainty.

But then, with reſpect to both theſe ſources of knowledge, reflection on ourſelves, and the experience of mankind in general, compel us to own their deficiency in reſpects moſt deeply concerning our beſt welfare.

And though 'tis not intended, by any *Eulogium* on Chriſtianity, to deny that the human underſtanding, well improved, may attain to many prime truths reſpecting God and morality, yet it is to be obſerved that this will be the portion of but comparatively few. The extent of knowledge to which any one can arrive, depends on the original ſtandard of his intellectual powers, and on their being cultivated by education, expanded by enquiry and the inſtructions of the wiſe, and emancipated from the ſhackles of corporeal affection, which war againſt truth as well as virtue. So that ſome will need foreign aid beyond the operations of their own minds, much more than others, in order to their acquaintance with the ſame truths; and after all, there may be many, we are ſure there are many, and thoſe of great concern, which man at his beſt eſtate falls ſhort of.

created things, as clear and unperplexed: The mind ſees without a courſe of argument that nothing which begins to exiſt, can be without ſome agency to produce it. There muſt therefore be ſome fixt and neceſſarily exiſting cauſe of all. So with regard to morality, right and wrong appear in many inſtances moſt obvious; and he who labours by a courſe of ethical arguments to prove the obliquity of ingratitude, profaneneſs, murder, and the like, might be more uſefully employed.

WHEREFORE, though we allow, that if all men were philoſophers, if all had capacity, leiſure and diſpoſition for ethical and metaphyſical ſpeculations; if the many were not diverted from cloſe thought, by the diſſipations and cares of life; nor prejudiced againſt truth and virtue by vicious affections; a much better ſyſtem of theology, theoretical and practical, would have been generally received than has been; yet it is fact, experience has proved it, that not only the untutored populace have, in the ſtate of nature, been groſsly ignorant of the great things which intimately concern virtue and happineſs; not only were philoſophers unable to make any great progreſs, in propagating the religion of nature; but theſe wiſe men of this world were far from agreeing among themſelves, in their ſentiments of the capital doctrines and rules of religion.

ANCIENT hiſtory, as well as modern voyagers and travellers, give us credible evidence of the wretched ſtate of unenlightened, uncultivated nature, notwithſtanding all the efforts of the wiſdom of this world. St. Paul's account was not exaggerated, when he ſaid, "The Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds, having the underſtanding darkned, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts; who, being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs. *

THE great God, the Lord of all, is a pure Spirit; and in proportion as the multitude are immerſed in

* Epheſ. iv. 17.

ſenſe,

ſenſe, their conceptions of him will be groſs and unworthy, and in ſuch proportion the motives to ſanctity will be weakned. Philoſophers have been few in any age, who have attained to ideas, in any meaſure juſt, of that great Being on whom all depend; and the arguments of thoſe few have been ſo ſubtle, that it is no wonder they had little ſucceſs in promoting true theiſm, to any very extenſive and happy effect.

As reſpect to God, is the formal idea of religion; ſo the fear and love of him, are the main motives to it. For a man may have a quick and lively ſenſe of moral good and evil; may clearly ſee beauty and proportion in the one, and ugly deformity in the other; may own an eternal fitneſs in the one, and that it's oppoſite is contrary to the invariable relations of things, and yet may be a very profligate, and ſay, "What care I for fitneſs, beauty, reaſon and right; I gratify myſelf, and have my reward for deſpiſing theſe fine ſpun ſpeculations? What little hold then muſt ſuch refinements have on thoſe, who think God ſuch an one, or worſe, than themſelves?

The natural proofs of the immortality of the ſoul, are extremely abſtracted. The beſt genius's, even at this day, muſt labour if they would feel their weight.—The reſurrection from the dead, nature never ſuſpected. How then ſhould the multitude be induced to live as heirs of immortality?

The chief rational baſis of the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments, is the preſent unequal diſtributions of Providence. But there are ſo many circumſtances

ſtances to be attended to, before that inequality is proved, that this kind of evidence is not eaſily or generally ſeen in a clear and ſtrong light. For how many never ſaw inſtances of this inequality? Who preciſely knows the moral characters of thoſe about him? Who is judge of the degree of happineſs attending conſcious virtue under ſufferings, or of the ſecret wretchedneſs of a profligate? Upon a penetrating mind, this argument has great force; but 'tis certain, that in times paſt it has not had a general, deep influence in theory or practice.

What man, concerned for his beſt intereſt, would not deſire to be aſſiſted, in emerging from the depths wherein the ſages of antiquity were plunged, concerning the chief good—the ſeat and nature of virtue and vice—fixt fate and free will—ſullen ſtoicism on the one ſide, and profane epicureiſm on the other? Who would not deſire a plain direction, "what he ſhould do to be ſaved."

Especially the great queſtion, what the adminiſtrations of God are or ſhall be, reſpecting offending creatures, who have tranſgreſſed the divine law, and can have no hope of happineſs, but on the baſis of mere mercy? This capital enquiry, I ſay, is far beyond human inveſtigation. Whether there is with God forgiveneſs of the penal effects of ſin, natural or judicial—and on what terms—of how many ſins, and with what aggravations—and what degrees of happineſs are to be expected—and when and where: Reaſon at it's beſt eſtate is ſilenced here. Becauſe theſe things depend on the will of him, whoſe "ways are not as our's;" whoſe government reſpects not merely this little ſpot, but an interminable univerſe; for whoſe peace and order, ſeverity to offenders might,

might, for ought men could say, be of the highest utility. Nature might hope, but unaided nature must fear, and be subjected to an anxious bondage.

WHEREFORE, I say, that upon these considerations,

II. "FAITH" is a suitable, needful and comfortable method of receiving knowledge, respecting most important points of doctrine, rules of life, and motives to right conduct.

SOME minds may be under such disadvantages, so unable to determine for themselves in weighty matters, that it may be their prudence to act upon the sentiments of others wiser than themselves. In matters of fact which our own senses have not been privy to, the testimony of men deserves such credit, as we ought to hazard our best interests upon.

BUT "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." "When we are convinced that the fountain of truth has declared, "this proposition is true," "this conduct is right"—"this is my method of administration"--"this it is my decree to do"--"that event you are to expect;" I say, so convinced, nothing remains for us, but to believe and do. And this is what I mean by "faith." A persuasion on that evidence, to which we ought in reason to give credit, that God has thus declared, commanded or forbidden, or that he has thus determined.

IT may please God to reveal his truths or will *immediately*. For cannot the Father of Spirits, ever present with us, enlighten imperfect minds by his inward energy; and direct those he so converses with, how to distinguish between

between divine communications, and the heights of an enthuſiaſtic fancy, or the illuſions of depraved ſpirits? He who denies this intercourſe between God and man, would or might, had he not ſenſible proof of the fact, ridicule it as an abſurd whimſy, that a particular modification and undulation of the air ſhould convey from one to another mind, ideas of the moſt abſtract propoſitions.

When the Almighty *mediately* uſes inſtruments, like ourſelves, to convey his light and truth to us, they muſt be able to give convincing evidence, that they received their meſſages from God, and were ordered by him to publiſh them. The proof muſt be ſuch as ſhall be perceived by thoſe to whom it is offered, and leave them no reaſon to doubt, but that what theſe meſſengers deliver, is really the "teſtimony of God," or that which he in a wiſe and ſufficient manner teſtifies to the truth of.

There is no other avenue of moral or religious truth, but what may be aided and rendered more perfect by "faith." Thus when the Pagans heard the pure ſentiments of inſpiration concerning the one true God, which laid before, if at all, yet in dark confuſion in their minds, thoſe truths commanded their aſſent, not merely on the credit of the preacher, but of their own intuitive truth. ‡ Similar advantages may attend this way of communicating truths, which tho' not before known, yet require but little tho't for conviction of their ſolid foundation.

But in matters of reaſoning, the advantage of faith is

‡ In this view it is far from being true, that in order to one's receiving any benefit from holy ſcripture, he muſt be firſt convinced of it's divine authority, for they may be a means themſelves of proving their original, and opening the mind to a thorough conviction thereof.

is ſtill more clearly viſible. For ſuch is the natural imperfection of the mind, ſuch the depths of ignorance into which it may ſink, ſuch its dullneſs in thoſe who for want of leiſure or application are unuſed to rational proceſſes, that innumerable doubts are reſolved, and difficulties removed, by the authority of a "thus ſaith the Lord," which might otherwiſe perplex the ſoul, and render the practical influence of the moſt weighty doctrines and advices nothing at all. Eſpecially will the caſe be ſo with thoſe who cannot abſtract, nor enter into the reaſon of things. And how many are they?

Most of all, with reſpect to truths which depend on the ſovereign wiſdom of God for their exiſtence, relative to ſuch conduct of his, as we muſt have otherwiſe been ignorant of, and yet it may highly concern us to know; there we plainly ſee that revelation from him, is the only method whereby we can be informed of them.

The preſumption therefore would be ſtrong, previous to any trial, that if God in mercy ſhould appear this way for men, whereby truth ſhould enter their minds by an eaſy convincing proceſs, and motives to virtue preſs with their full weight; real religion would be promoted and extended, in abundantly greater degrees, than by any different method. If therefore Chriſtianity in it's purity has had ſuch an effect, a ſtrong argument of its divinity ariſes.—But leaving preſumptions, I proceed,

III. Chriſtianity is a ſyſtem of truths, ſpeculative and practical, of the higheſt importance to men; our faith of which, *properly ſo called*, or in it's ſtricteſt definition, is founded

founded, and ſtably founded, on the power of God, exerted for the purpoſe of demanding and inducing that faith.

THOUGH Chriſtianity is moſt firmly founded on argument, yet the goſpel is not merely a ſyſtem of reaſoning. It takes for granted thoſe firſt principles, which muſt be fixed in the mind, before it can aſſent to any thing, as having the authority of a divine revelation. It offers itſelf as a meſſage from the God of all grace to a dark and degenerate world. Men of penetration will indeed much ſerve the cauſe of Chriſt, by their reſearches into the rational and moral foundation of many revealed truths, but it is by a perſuaſion that they are the declarations of God, that we formally ſubmit to them and embrace them.

CHRISTIANITY is built on this foundation, that there is one only true and eternal God, the creator, ſupporter, ruler and judge of all, who is the " hater of iniquity," but the " rewarder of thoſe that diligently ſeek him", and that " man is his offspring."—And it teaches us that man was originally deſigned for immortality, while he maintained his innocence ; but placed in ſuch a rank of beings that he might offend, the natural fruit of which would be the encreaſed power of vicious inclinations ; the judicial effect, death.—It aſſures us, that man of his own free agency offended, vice propagated, and death took place.—But that in ſuch a deſperate ſituation, the mercy of him who is preſented to us, not by terms which denote his abſtract, metaphyſical eſſence, but which inſpire reverence and confidence, tempering the

ſeverity

ſeverity of a judge with the bowels of a father, provided a method worthy of himſelf, whereupon the whole human race ſhould again live, and be placed in various conditions of trial for an happy immortality.—That his ſupreme wiſdom, which in all his works within our obſervation, uſes ſubordinate means and inſtruments to bring about his ends, appointed one perſon to be under him the ſaviour of ſinners, from the firſt ſtep of it in their being "turned from darkneſs to light," to his finally preſenting them to his Father, as worthy of immortal honour and happineſs.

THIS great perſon is characterized, in terms inſpiring reverence, love, and demanding all credit and confidence, as the "brightneſs of the Father's glory, the expreſs image of his perſon," who "was in the beginning with God, and is God." This Son of God in due time became incarnate, and employed life to the moſt beneficent purpoſes of bringing men to God; which he eſpecially did, by inſtructing us in what it moſt of all concerned us to know, and none but a meſſenger from God could inform us of, viz. "That God was in him reconciling the world to himſelf," being diſpoſed to forgive ſinners, and reſtore them, on gracious and equitable terms, to ſuch bleſſings as even unſpotted innocence could not claim of right—that unfeigned repentance and the genuine fruits of it, "ſobriety, righteouſneſs and godlineſs," are the terms of that covenant of grace, whereby we are renewed to hope. He has furniſhed us with every motive which can work on a cautious or generous mind, above all with the proſpect of the future terrors of the Lord, and "the bleſſed hope of the glorious appearing of the

great God and our ſaviour Jeſus Chriſt. Theſe ſolemn futurities he has diſtinctly and frequently ſet before us.

And to the end that none ſhould, from this diſplay of undeſerved mercy, preſume upon eaſy pardon, but might, when they gratefully own the benefits, reverence the purity of God and fear before him; for theſe, I ſay, among other intentions, the death of Chriſt, a moſt memorable event, is declared to be of the nature of a ranſom, a ſacrifice, which having been once offered to God, every meaſure of mercy thenceforth conſiſted with the rectoral holineſs of the Lord of men and angels. At the ſame time the divine love of ſanctity has been illuſtriouſly ſhewn, in the noble reward of the perſevering obedience of Jeſus, who was therefore exalted to all power, that he might have full ſcope to exerciſe that ſublime friendſhip to men, which by dying for them he proved was near his heart.

Jesus is "head over all things to the church." He promotes his cauſe by the wiſeſt means. He firſt ſent forth miniſters to propagate it, armed with the power of God. He fixed conſtitutions and ordinances, to derive on it all the advantages of religious ſociety. And he is the diſpenſer, under God, of that internal influence, reſpecting the real diſpoſitions of men, whereby, in ſpite of weakneſs and corruption, they avail themſelves of the means of repentance and virtue; whereby they are "born of God", and become, in the worthieſt ſenſe, the "Sons of God."

The immediate agent here, is a divine perſon, termed "the Spirit of God", whoſe perfections and office demand our veneration and dependance. The

THE exalted Jeſus is to maintain this poſt of dignity, till the ends of wiſdom in this ſtate of things is anſwered. Then the ſcene ſhall be cloſed; all theſe ſubordinations ſhall ceaſe; and "God ſhall be all in all."

I HAVE given this *compendium* of Chriſtianity *properly ſo called*, to collect in one view thoſe important articles, which evidently need other proof than the "wiſdom of men"; they are the chief parts of the adminiſtrations of God, with which our welfare is connected. To aſk, why there are ſuch, rather than of a different nature or form, is a queſtion which only pride and petulance would dare to aſk. The only proper enquiry is, are they really ſuch? And the anſwer to this queſtion, which is our "faith, ſtandeth not in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God."

THE wiſdom of man may be challenged to contrive a more proper way, to reveal ſuch things, and induce the belief of them, than the ſending meſſengers to declare them, and to give thoſe they were ſent to, full evidence that theſe miniſters of God were ſpecially charged with them by him; that what they ſpake was not their own, but his who ſent them. That this is the caſe with reſpect to Chriſtianity, I now proceed briefly to illuſtrate and confirm, which will compleat our ſubject.

THAT Jeſus, "the author and finiſher of our faith," (for I ſhall confine myſelf to him) wrought, not one or a few, but a continued ſeries of miraculous works, is a truth of fact as fully proved, as any one of that kind can be.—They were many,—indiſputably beſide the courſe

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of nature, and beyond human power,—done in a manner which evinced their reality,—in places of conſpicuous reſort, and with public appeals to the ſpectators. And to complete the ſeries, he aroſe from the dead himſelf, according to his own prediction and declaration. Theſe were facts, which his worſt enemies who were contemporary with them, ſagacious, engaged in intereſt and inclination to deny if they could, yet denied not. Numbers of more impartial minds, eye-witneſſes of them, were convinced, for they became his diſciples. His own reſurrection was by the effects of it eſpecially made ſo certain, that the continuance and ſucceſs of his cauſe can by no poſſibility be accounted for, but by the reality of that reſurrection. For conſidering the oppoſition of prejudice, of philoſophy, of luſt, of the ſecular arm; thro' their combined influence it muſt have declined and died, if this capital fact had not been true; or, to adopt the ſingular language of a ſubtle enemy of our faith, it's ſucceſs muſt have been an infinitely greater miracle than any on which it profeſſed to be founded; and therefore, according to the doctrine of Mr. *Hume*, the reality of theſe miracles muſt be aſſuredly believed.

JESUS, when he wro't theſe works, ever affirmed that he did them by the power of God; and appealed to them as that evidence which the great God and Father of all offered, for the conviction of all who ſaw them, or ſhould have credible teſtimony of them; that all his doctrines and inſtructions were divine truths, and ſuch truths as God had commiſſioned him to publiſh to the world. The conſequence is ungainſayable; that if the power of God was therein manifeſted to the very end of inducing

inducing faith of the truth of Jesus, we ought to hear him, to attend to, and embrace what he delivered, as firmly as though we heard them by "a voice from the heavenly glory."

To prove that it was so, what shall be said? Power far superior to that of the visible agent, was certainly exerted. The agent declared, that was "the power of God." And did Jesus ever shew a symptom of deceit or falshood? Did he not give the strongest proofs of veracity and integrity? Was not the design and tendency of his system worthy of God to interpose in favour of? Superior beings, one at least, were certainly concerned in these marvellous works. Were they evil ones? Read Christ's argument, infidel! in Matth. xv. 25. and be silent. Were they good ones? They could not then combine with an impostor. Nor would the God of love suffer an imposition on his poor creatures, which they should have no reasonable means of detecting. They must therefore have been the ministers of God; the power in the last resort is his. Let any sober mind reflect on the uniform, plain and high Tendency of Christianity, to honour the God of purity and mercy, and to enlighten, purify, and ennoble the nature of men; let him review what it enjoins on us at present, and teaches us to expect hereafter; and will he, can he doubt whence it's origin, and who sealed it's truth? Could we transport ourselves back to the times and places, where he "who went about doing good," healed the sick and raised the dead; could we then have mixed with the admiring multitude; could we have followed him, and hear the gracious words which proceeded from his lips;

lips; could we hear him ſay, "The words which I ſpeak are not mine, but the Father's which ſent me, and "if ye believe not for my words, yet believe for the work's ſake;" ſhould we not without heſitation have owned him in his true character, unleſs perhaps a yet depraved mind had tempted us, by ſubtle fineſſe and the ſophiſtic deceitfulneſs of ſin, to leave the plain ſentiments of common ſenſe and judgment, and to deceive our own ſelves. Would not infidelity have been beaten out of every entrenchment? Muſt we not have been forced to own, "ſurely this man is the Son of God?"

THUS much muſt ſerve for the illuſtration and confirmation of our text, ſo deſcriptive of the foundation of Chriſtianity, properly ſo called. Not that I would be ſuppoſed to ſet up miracles as the only proof of it's truth. The excellency of the moral part of our religion—the agreement of what is merely revealed with our natural ideas of the holineſs, mercy and ſovereign wiſdom of God—it's improving upon former diſpenſations of heaven—the accompliſhment of ancient prophecies—the propagation of this cauſe in ſpite of all oppoſition.—All theſe and others are arguments of great weight. But they exceed the bounds of one diſcourſe. And after all, this of miracles is the capital proof in the caſe, which the founder of our faith laid the greateſt ſtreſs upon. Take away this, the foundation is comparatively ſlender; lay this baſis, it will ſupport whatever you juſtly build upon it, though collateral props were removed. For hereby he who delivered things worthy of God, proved that he came from God.

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THE credibility of the gospel history, whereon we depend for the reality of these wonders, and all subsequent ones wrought by the first ministers of Christ, is also a distinct subject, capable of convincing proof, but must be now omitted.

I CONCLUDE with some REFLECTIONS.——And,

1. AN opposer of our religion might well be asked, whether he could lay his hand on his heart, and say his design was friendly to mankind. If he should succeed in his endeavours to evert it, has he a clearer system of theology to propose, better rules of, or higher motives to private and social virtue? Has he a more efficacious plan to lay, for promoting the honour of God, and good of men? Or can he relieve our ignorance, and point out the designs of God to us? Let the writings of modern infidels answer these questions. If then in proportion as one weakens the faith of Christianity, he hurts the interests of peace and order, virtue and happiness, is not the presumption violent, that he is wrong? What a heart or what a head must he have, to labour to overthrow the best foundation of virtue, and place in its stead a vague, heartless system, which every one may garble, according to his taste or prejudices. Men of this turn have reason to examine themselves closely, what spirit they are of; for truth comes not "to destroy men, but to save them."

2. IT ought to be remarked as an instance of the wisdom and goodness of God, that the evidence of miracles is extremely well adapted to the working faith in the plain and simple, and for them, as being the body of mankind,

mankind, the gospel was chiefly designed. Had it been intended only for the "disputer," "the wise man," it might perhaps have been confirmed in another manner. But the people cannot abstract much, they cannot draw far-fetched inferences, they are exposed to err, and lose themselves when they attempt it. But they can see. Experience has informed them what is beyond human power. When, therefore, they see works done far beyond it, and the agent says, "These I do to prove that God is with me;" they can infer as certainly as the shrewdest philosopher, "this is the finger of God"; this man could not do these things, except God were with him: And on the other hand, were such proof adduced in favour of falshood and hurtful opinions, they can say, either these are juggling frauds, or an enemy to God and goodness hath done this. But the nature of Christianity is such, that this last comes not in question; it's spirit breathes "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to and among men."

3. From this last remark, I am led to another, not very foreign from it: It is this, Christianity, properly so called, deals very little in metaphysics or any abstruse science. It is designed for the high benefit of those of common understanding, of babes. Of "God the eternal spirit," it declares not the physical essence, but his attributes; it presents him to us as a creator, lord, judge and father; and from our ideas of these relations, excites us to every becoming affection towards him. "The blessed Trinity" is not therein described by the doctrine of triangles, or of the emanation of light from the sun; but it teaches us the personal properties of the Sacred Three, whom we adore,

adore, and on whom we depend. Beyond theſe we ought not, nor can we proceed in our ſpeculations. The goſpel relieves entirely under philoſophical perplexities, concerning moral liberty and neceſſity; for when one, by applying the properties of mechanical powers to the reaſonable mind, has argued himſelf or others out of all ſenſe of moral obligation, and reduced himſelf or them to be the paſſive ſubjects of foreign impulſe; if then he turn to the goſpel, he will find ſuch a manner of addreſs to himſelf and all, as is agreeable to that freedom he was intuitively conſcious of, until too abſtracted reveries cauſed "the light within him to be darkneſs." Jeſus proved himſelf to be the way, the truth, and the life; his authority is deciſive; the limits of his diſcoveries the wiſeſt. And here may I take the liberty to mention it, as an uſeful caution to *my young brethren*, the ſtudents of this ſociety, eſpecially thoſe who are deſigned for the pulpit, to beware of relying on the wiſdom of men, or the reſearches of human ſagacity, where revelation ought to be their only guide. There was a time when the *Dogma's* of ſchoolmen and monks were deemed ſound rules of expoſition of the goſpel. Departure from them was conſtrued to be a departure from the analogy of faith. Their uſurpation has declined. We ſhall act as wrong, and hazard as much, if we put in their place the *Dogma's* of philoſophy. Fix therefore in your minds the deſign and extent of revelation, and receive it's truths from the mouth of its divine author. Particularly in the article juſt now referred to. There has been a good deal of controverſy of late, reſpecting human power and weakneſs, of the unregenerate in particular; and here and there a text has been ſuppoſed to

favour metaphyſical tenets, contrary to the general tenor of the goſpel, as well as to our own intimate conſciouſneſs. Let others perplex themſelves about an untruſtrable ſeries of motives operating on the mind; but do you ſtudy the whole goſpel; aſk yourſelves, who was its author? whom does he addreſs? and in what manner? and you will be quite eaſy. He who ſpeaks there, could not uſe a vain, deceitful or enſnaring addreſs. The conſequence is plain. Come to Chriſt then for light. None teacheth like him. Preach as he did, and you will be "workers together with him". You will have no drawbacks upon your zeal in perſuading ſinners to repentance; nor pull down with one hand, what you build up with the other.

4. Let us be grateful to God for his diſtinguiſhing goodneſs to us, that we have ſuch a ſure foundation of our faith, ſuch high advantages for virtue and happineſs. To this end, let us compare our ſituation with that of thoſe who lived before Chriſt appeared, or who now "ſit in darkneſs." And whatever infidels may ſuggeſt, we may have ſuch reſentment, without any diſhonourable imputation on the ſovereign diſpenſer of his own gifts. "Shall our eye be evil, becauſe he is good"? Inſtead of praiſing him for what we enjoy, ſhall we tax him with cruelty becauſe all enjoy not the ſame? How baſe! Shall an angel murmur, becauſe man ranks not ſo high as he! A man, becauſe he is preferred to brutes! One man becauſe he has a better capacity, or more external goods, than another;! "Is it not right that the Lord of all ſhould do what he will with his own"! But the goſpel does not leave us here. It is the doctrine

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of Chriſtianity, *properly ſo called*, that Chriſt died for all, that all the human race may have great benefit from his redemption. This is not inferred from the word *All*, not from a ſingle, detached word, but from the profeſſed deſign of his undertaking for men; which was, according to the will of the univerſal Father and Lord, to procure a general reſurrection, to the end that all may be tried (in the manner the wiſdom of God ſees fit) and be judged according to the deeds done in the body. Different religious advantages are various talents put into men's hands to improve. Some have one committed to them, ſome ten. Fidelity in the improvement of one, will be accepted and rewarded. The good improvement of ten, will receive a much more excellent reward. If any improve not the one talent, God will be righteous when he judgeth. May he not indulge alſo to generous benevolence. Leave then our fellow-men to God, and ſtop not the ſprings of gratitude by gloomy, uncertain ſpeculations.

Lastly, Let us aim at juſt apprehenſions of the nature and evidence of Chriſtianity, that it may lie clearly in our minds; that we may be able to defend it ſucceſsfully againſt gain-ſayers; and that it may become the power of God unto ſalvation to us. Let us therefore apply to ſerious conſideration, and ſearch the ſcriptures; eſpecially deliberately ſtudy the goſpel of Chriſt; and to all our endeavours add conſtant prayers to the Father of lights, to enlighten and direct us, that we may be made wiſe to ſalvation. Tho' I do not think that the apoſtle, in our text, meant, by the "power of God," an inward influence upon the mind, yet it is a Chriſtian doctrine,

doctrine, that "if any man lack wiſdom, he ſhould aſk it of God, who giveth his ſpirit of light and truth to thoſe who aſk him." Eſpecially let us ſee to it, if we would be under his direction, that our aims be right and good. The great end of ſpeculation is that practice may be guided and influenced. And our Lord has promiſed, "if any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." * Let that then be our chief inducement in labouring to be grounded in the faith, which was the chief deſign of the goſpel hiſtory itſelf; theſe books were written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life thro' him." John xx. 31.

* John xvii. 7.

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